

386

Can. Marie de
l'Incarnation, 1195

THE LIFE

OF THE

VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION,

Joint Foundress
AND
first Superior of the Ursulines of Quebec.

BY A RELIGIOUS OF THE URSULINE COMMUNITY,
BLACKROCK, CORK.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE materials for the following Biography have been gathered principally from "The Life of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation" by her son, and from "The History of the Ursuline Monastery at Quebec," by a member of that community, the former published in 1677; the latter in 1863.

The Life of the Venerable Mother by her son, is founded partly on her own communications regarding the graces with which she had been favoured, and partly on her correspondence with himself extending over the thirty years which she passed in Canada. With the genuine information thus received, he intersperses, under the name of "Additions," further details which had either come under his personal observation, or been gleaned from perfectly reliable sources. His work is therefore a sure and invaluable guide to the biographer.

The accounts of her inner life referred to, were written by the Venerable Mother at two different epochs, and each time in obedience to an imperative command from her confessors. The first written in 1633, the 34th year of her age, fell into the possession of the Ursulines of St. Denis, near Paris, who on hearing that Dom Claude Martin was engaged in writing his holy Mother's life, obligingly sent him the precious document. The second, written in 1654, was forwarded to him from Canada.

The Annals of the Quebec Ursulines also afford

rich material to the historian of the Mother of the Incarnation, their pages containing constant references to and quotations from her letters both spiritual and historical, as well as from the Annual Reports of the Jesuit Missioners, and other cotemporary documents of the highest authenticity and the deepest interest.

The historical statements in the introductory chapter, rest chiefly on the authority of the Abbé Ferland in his "Cours d'Histoire du Canada," 1861, and of Bancroft in his "History of the United States," 1841. The historical facts incidentally introduced in the course of the work can be verified by reference to the Abbé Ferland or any other Canadian historian, or to the Letters of the Mother of the Incarnation.

It only remains to be noticed that the words "saint," "saintly," and others of similar import are used throughout solely in their popular acceptation, and not with any intention of anticipating the decision of the Church regarding the sanctity of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation or of any other of God's servants mentioned in these pages.

In like manner, the record of miraculous occurrences, visions, and other extraordinary supernatural favours, is understood to rest as yet only on human authority, and therefore to claim no more than the degree of credibility which attaches to any well authenticated human statement.

April 30th 1880.

208th Anniversary of the death of the
Venerable Mother of the Incarnation.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

	<i>Page</i>
A Glance at Canada as it was in the days of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation,	9

THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER.

FIRST PERIOD, 1599 TO 1631.

HER LIFE IN THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Her infancy, childhood and youth.—Early call to union with God.—Charity to the poor.—Purity of soul.—Inclination for the Religious Life,	51
--	----

CHAPTER II.

Her married life.—Rule of life.—Love of prayer.—Perfect fulfilment of duty.—Patience under trial.—Zeal for her household.—Influence.—Death of her Husband,	65
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Her First year of Widowhood.—Life of solitude in the World.—Vision of the application of the Precious Blood to her soul.—Increased purity of conscience.—Charity to the sick poor,	75
--	----

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER IV.	
She quits her solitude.—New evidence of her purity of soul.—Humiliation and dependence in her Sister's house,	81
CHAPTER V.	
She is called to a high degree of Divine Union.—New invitation to the perfection of Interior Purity.—Infused knowledge of the nature of the works of God.—Austerities.—Love of contempt.—Active life.—Makes the vows of poverty and obedience.—Heavenly favour.—Temptations,	86
CHAPTER VI.	
Supernatural favours.—Lights on the mystery of the Incarnation.—Vision of the Most Adorable Trinity.—Submission to her Director.—Temptations renewed.—Lights on the Divine attributes,	95
CHAPTER VII.	
Second Vision of the Most Adorable Trinity.—She is elevated to a sublime degree of Divine Union,	100
CHAPTER VIII.	
She resolves to embrace the Religious Life.—Decides finally on the Ursuline Order.—Temptations.—Disappearance of her son.—His return.—Enters the Convent,	108
CHAPTER IX.	
Saint Angela, Foundress of the Ursulines.—Her Early sanctity.—Zeal for the instruction of the ignorant.—Lays the foundation of her great work at Dézenzano.—Vision of the Mysterious Ladder.—Removes to Brescia.—Goes to the Holy Land.—To Rome.—To Cremona.—Returns to Brescia.—Founds her Order.—Her holy Death.—Parting Counsels.—Prediction of the stability of her work.—Diffusion of the Order.—Archconfraternity of St. Angela,	119

SECOND PERIOD, 1631 TO 1639.

81	THE VENERABLE MOTHER'S RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FRANCE.
----	--

86	Her Novitiate.—Holy joy.—Virtue tested.—Love of common life.—Humility.—Obedience.—Trials from her son.—Offers herself as a victim for his salvation.—Third Vision of the Adorable Trinity.—Receives the Holy Habit,	143
----	---	-----

95	CHAPTER II.	
100	Supernatural favours.—Infused knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and of the Latin language.—Facility for imparting Spiritual Instruction.—Temptations.—Loses her Director.—Interior desolation.—Fidelity.—Consolation.—Profession.—Renewed Trials.—Reassuring direction.—New difficulties about her son, .	149

108	CHAPTER III.	
119	She is named Assistant-Mistress of Novices.—Prophetic Vision of her vocation to Canada.—Spiritual maxims and instructions.—Spirit of silence.—Forms many Saints,	156

CHAPTER IV.

119	Increase of zeal for the salvation of souls.—Divinely directed to pray for their conversion through the Heart of Jesus.—Her vocation for Canada is revealed to her,	163
-----	---	-----

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER V.	
Madame de la Peltrie.—Early Piety.—Charity.—Desire for the Religious State.—Obliged to marry.—Loses her Husband.—Zeal for Souls.—Is inspired to devote herself to the Canadian Mission.—Her vocation con- firmed in a dangerous illness.—Opposition.—Death of her Father.—Services of Monsieur de Bernières.— Goes to Paris,	166

CHAPTER VI.

The Mother of the Incarnation declares her vocation for Canada.—Contradictions and Humiliations.—Her confidence in God.—Esteem for her vocation.—Sub- mission to the Divine Will,	173
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

Madame de la Peltrie invites the Mother of the Incarna- tion to accompany her to Canada.—The Venerable Mother's answer.—Madame de la Peltrie at Tours.— The Mothers of the Incarnation and St. Bernard selected for the Mission.—Opposition from relatives.— The Venerable Mother's vision of the trials awaiting her.—Monsieur de Bernières.—Farewell Letter, . . .	178
--	-----

THIRD PERIOD, 1639 TO 1672.**THE VENERABLE MOTHER'S LIFE IN CANADA.****CHAPTER I.**

Embarkation.—Alarm from a Spanish Fleet.—Danger from an Iceberg.—Arrival at Tadoussac.—First night in Canada.—Reception at Quebec.—Visit to Sillery.— The “Louvre.”	191
--	-----

Page	
	CHAPTER II.
166	The Mother of the Incarnation recognises Canada to be the country shown her in her prophetic vision.—Opening of the Schools.—Study of the Indian languages.—Small-pox among the Pupils.—Arrival of two Sisters from Paris.—Union of Congregations.—Building of new Convent, 199
173	CHAPTER III.
	Work at the “Louvre.”—Progress of the Pupils.—Piety.—Lively Faith in the Real Presence.—Refinement of feeling.—Zeal.—Teresa the Huron.—Agnes.—Little Truants,—Banquets at the “Louvre,” 206
178	CHAPTER IV.
	Renewed Trials of the Venerable Mother.—Madame de la Peltrie removes to Montreal.—Great Poverty of the Ursulines.—Apprehensions.—The Venerable Mother’s confidence in God.—Fidelity to grace.—Exactitude to duty.—Active Life.—First Elections.—Removal to the New Monastery.—Return of Madame de la Peltrie, 218
91	CHAPTER V.
	The Mother of the Incarnation a victim for the Conversion of her son and her niece.—Conversion of both, followed by the cessation of her interior sufferings.—Arrival of new subjects from France.—Mother St. Athanasius Superior.—First Profession at Quebec.—Destruction of the Hurons.—Charity of the Ursulines to the Survivors, 228
	CHAPTER VI.
	The Monastery consumed.—Charity of the Hospital Sisters.—Sympathy of the Hurons.—Serenity of the Venerable Mother.—Lodgings in Madame de la Peltrie’s House.—Poverty.—Monastery Rebuilt.—A Pretty Picture.—Removal to the New Monastery, 241

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER VII.	
Early Life of Mother St. Joseph.—Her zeal for the Indians.—Virtues.—Last Illness.—Happy Death.—Apparitions after Death,	254
CHAPTER VIII.	
The Seminary Re-opened.—The good work partially checked.—Geneviève and Catherine.—Appointment of Bishop Laval.— Threatened Invasion of the Iroquois.—Heroism of Daulac and his Companions,	265
CHAPTER IX.	
Trade in Intoxicating Liquors.—Awful Manifestation of Divine Anger.—Repentance.—Prosperity.—The Marquis of Tracy Viceroy.—Expedition against the Iroquois.—Advancement of the Colony,	274
CHAPTER X.	
New Sisters from France.—Illness of Mother of the Incarnation.—She is Re-elected Superior.—Lingers for Eight Years. — Illness and Death of Madame de la Peltre,	287
CHAPTER XI.	
Last Illness of the Mother of the Incarnation.—Her Blessed Death. — Universal regret for her loss.—Her Virtues,	295
<hr/>	
APPENDIX,	327
Evening Devotion of the Mother of the Incarnation in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,	345
Evening Devotion of the Venerable Mother in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,	346
A few Parting Words on the Old Monastery of Quebec,	347

A GLANCE AT CANADA IN THE DAYS
OF
THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION.

EARLY in the sixteenth century, reports of the progress of discovery in America began to make their way to France, and, as a natural result, to arouse emulation. For no one had the stirring tales a greater charm than for the reigning Sovereign, Francis I., whose spirit of rivalry, thirst of glory, and love of adventure, they were especially calculated to stimulate. It would have been as repugnant to the nature, as it was inconsistent with the policy of the ambitious monarch, to permit the Kings of Spain* and Portugal† to monopolize the glory and the advantages anticipated from possession of the western world; such an idea was not to be for a moment entertained. If their banners waved over its Southern Continent, that was no reason, he argued, why France should not unfurl her fair white lilies in the

* In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered the islands of the Western Hemisphere, and took possession in the name of the Spanish Sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella. At his third voyage, in 1498, he added to the first discovery, that of the Continent of South America.

† In 1500, Alvarez de Cabral, a Portuguese navigator, took possession of Brazil for his royal master, Emmanuel, King of Portugal. Amerigo Vespucci had discovered its coast in 1498.

Northern.* "I should like," he exclaimed with characteristic impetuosity and originality, "I should like to see the clause in Adam's will which authorizes these, my royal cousins, to divide the New World between them!" As there seemed, however, little chance of his being permitted to adjust the rival claims by a reference to our first father's last testament, he resolved, as a more practical solution of difficulties, to take the law into his own hands, and by getting possession of a share of the spoils to secure at least nine points of it in his favour.

In justice to his Most Christian Majesty, it must be admitted that although self-interested considerations had no doubt a large part in his decision, other and worthier views influenced him perhaps even more strongly. If his proud title of eldest son of the Church was to be more than an empty name, it devolved on him, he felt, to take prompt measures for introducing Christianity into some part of the newly discovered idolatrous West. Spain and Portugal had anticipated him in one direction, it was true, but the world of Canada still presented a vast field for his zeal in another. The existence of that barbarous, heathen land was now an ascertained fact. What nobler use could he make of his royal resources than to introduce into it the two-fold light of faith and civilization? None, assuredly. Over far-off Canada, therefore, he determined that, fortune favouring, the banner of the Lily should ere long float.

* The mainland of North America was discovered in 1497 by the celebrated Italian adventurers, John Cabot and his sons, under a commission from Henry VII. of England, who, however, did not avail of the discovery.

And, truly, it was well worth the seeking, that fair, too long neglected gem in Nature's coronet, the distant land over the Western sea. Cultivation has no doubt done much for the Canada of Francis I., still even in the undeveloped beauty of those remote days, its natural features were strikingly fine. Prominent then, as now, was the noble river flowing through its midst—its own beautiful St. Lawrence, “the river of Canada,” as the French sometimes styled it by pre-eminence; a recognised monarch* in the world of waters, embracing in its wide-spread dominion, rapids and cataracts, and tributary streams, with vast lakes like seas, and a little world of islands like fairy realms,† the whole enclosed within romantic shores, worthy to form the framing of so magnificent a picture.

Then, as now, the valley of the St. Lawrence was rich in every variety of natural beauty, but with this difference, that at the arrival of the French the superb panorama was more or less enveloped in an apparently interminable forest, to which the predominance of the pine imparted in some places an air

* “The St. Lawrence has a course of nearly three thousand miles, and varies in breadth from one mile to ninety miles. It annually discharges to the ocean about 4,277,880 *millions of tons* of fresh water, of which 2,112,120 millions of tons may be reckoned melted snow—the quantity discharged before the thaw comes on being 4,512 millions of tons per day for 240 days, and the quantity after the thaw begins being 25,560 millions per day for 125 days, the depths and velocity when in and out of flood being duly considered.”—*Martin’s British Colonies*.

† Among others, the Thousand Islands, happily described as “picturesque combinations of wood, rock, and water, such as imagination is apt to attach to the happy islands in the Vision of Mirza.”

of solemnity, and even gloom. Since then, the axe has done its work in the inhabited portions, opening up a landscape of singular loveliness in some parts; of stern, wild grandeur in others; nevertheless, enough of the lordly old woods still remains, to justify their claim to a place among the characteristics of Canadian scenery: Lovely in their summer garb of many-hued green, relieved by a carpeting of myriads of flowering plants, they are glorious beyond telling, when after a few frosty nights at the close of autumn, they assume every imaginable variety of shade, from glowing scarlet and soft violet, to rich brown and bright yellow.

Champlain, the founder of Quebec, describes the Canada of his day as beautiful, agreeable, and fertile ; producing grain of every kind ; abounding in valuable trees ; yielding wild fruits of pleasant flavour, and well-stocked with fish and game. Later observation was to add to the catalogue of its natural riches, mines of iron, lead and copper. The early colonists, too, have recorded that the river banks were covered with a profusion of vines so productive, that it seemed difficult to trace all their luxuriance to the unaided hand of nature.

As a partial counterpoise to its many advantages, Canada is exposed to extremes of temperature, alternating between heat nearly tropical, and cold approaching polar. Owing to the clearing of the forests, and other causes, the winter is now somewhat less harsh than in the days of the first settlers; it is, however, still a very severe one. And yet, even under its stern reign, Canada is not without natural charms,—its great river fast bound in icy chains;

every stream, and lake and rivulet in the land a sheet of sparkling crystal ; every trunk, and branch, and twig glittering in the sun as if sprinkled with diamond dust ; every valley, hill and woodland, every mountain slope and far-stretching plain wrapped in a soft mantle of spotless snow.

Yet, with all its gifts and resources, Canada had reposed for long ages in lonely grandeur. The chronicles of the Old World told of many a generation gone by. They traced the rise and fall of many empires, and the succession of many dynasties. They recorded the advance of art and science. They contained long lists of names inscribed, some in the annals of human greatness, some on the pages of the Book of Life. They spoke of the glorious triumphs of the Church, and enumerated the nations gathered within her fold, and still, on that fair land of the West, no step had trodden but that of the Red Man ; or broad, deep river no boat had ever bounded but his own light canoe ; through its length and breadth no Deity's name had resounded, save that of some senseless pagan idol. Truly it was time, as Francis I. concluded, that the ray of faith and civilization should beam on it at last.

In 1523, he sent out his first expedition, under the command of Verrazani, a Florentine, who, sailing along the coast from 28° to 50° north latitude, formally took possession of the whole region in the name of his royal patron, and called it "La Nouvelle France." But while France was thus adding to her glory in the New World, her arms received a severe check in the Old. When Verrazani returned in

1525, he found the nation mourning the disastrous results of the battle of Pavia, and too much absorbed by grave interests at home, to be disposed to concern itself about lesser ones abroad. Deprived of the support of his royal protector, then a prisoner at Madrid, he could neither utilize nor follow up his first observations, and for ten years more we hear nothing of Canada, except that mariners from France, and other European nations, carried on a successful fishery on its coasts, where as many as fifty ships from Europe might sometimes be seen together. The French called the country the newly found lands, an appellation which survives in that of the largest island. It is stated on the authority of certain old chroniclers, that the islands off the mainland had been known more than a century before the era of Columbus and Cabot to sailors from the Basque Provinces, who named them "Bacallos," their term for cod-fish. The name "Canada" seems to have been vaguely applied at this period sometimes to a part, sometimes to the whole of the region watered by the St. Lawrence. One derivation of it supposes the arrival of the French to have been preceded by a visit from the Spaniards, who, searching for precious metals, and finding none, expressed their disappointment by the frequent repetition of the words "aca nada," "nothing here." According to a more probable etymology, the term may be traced to the Iroquois word "Kanata," a village, or assembly of huts, which word the early European discoverers mistook for the name of the country.

Nothing daunted by the failure of his first attempt

at colonisation, Francis authorised a new expedition in 1534, and intrusted the command of it to Jacques Cartier, a well-known navigator of St. Malo. In addition to his experience as a seaman, Cartier possessed a profoundly religious spirit, and in risking the long voyage, with its certain dangers and uncertain success, he seems to have been wholly influenced by zeal for the conversion of the savages. He has given us an insight into his ideas in his own quaint style: "Considering," he says, "the varied benefits of God to man, I note among others how the sun pours his genial rays on every part of the globe in succession, excluding none from their beneficent influence, and my simple mode of reasoning leads me to infer that our great Creator intends for all his creatures a share in the illumination of faith, no less than in the cheering light of the orb of day. The sun comes to us from the East, as did our holy faith; may we not conclude, that as he passes thence to the West, the beams of the Gospel are meant to follow in his track, and pour their brightness in that direction too."

Cartier set sail on the 20th of April, 1534; reached Newfoundland in safety on the 10th of May, and sailing along the coast as far as the Bay of Gaspé, planted near its entrance a lofty cross bearing a shield with the lilies of France, and a suitable inscription. The chief result of this first voyage was the discovery of the great river of Canada, and the opening of communication with the natives. The season being somewhat too advanced for farther exploration, Cartier returned to France in the month of August, accompanied by two young Indians,

destined as future interpreters to their countrymen.

Re-entering the river on the 10th of August of the following year, he named it the St. Lawrence, in honour of the saint whose feast the Church celebrates on that day. The island at its mouth, now called Anticosti, he named the isle of the Assumption. He finally anchored off Stadacona, where Quebec now stands, and on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in the next month, the Holy Sacrifice was for the first time offered on the Canadian shores. Cartier next visited the Indian settlement of Hochelaga, situated on an island formed by the St. Lawrence and a branch of the Ottawa. The discovery of this vaunted hamlet, with its picturesque surroundings, had been among the most cherished of his day dreams, nor was the reality unworthy of the dream. From the summit of an isolated mountain at the extremity of the island, his view embraced in front a wide expanse of fertile land; around him stretched forests of oak, with here and there a waving field of silken-tufted Indian corn; at his feet lay the hamlet, built in the form of a circle, and fortified in Indian fashion by three graduated rows of palisades, and to crown the whole, girding the island like a broad silver belt, as far as the eye could reach, shone the sunlit river. Enchanted with the beauty of the scene, and delighted too with the courteous greeting of the savages, their simplicity, their generosity and their ardour for instruction, he breathed a prayer, that a land so fair and a people so gentle might be marked ere long as the heritage of France,—above all, as a portion of the Kingdom of God. In his enthusiasm,

he called the mountain on which he stood, Mount Royal, whence the name "Montreal."* At Stadacona where he spent the winter, he had the consolation of instructing the natives in the holy faith, by the aid of the two Indian youths, who, as already noticed, had accompanied him to France on his first return voyage, and spent the interval between that and his second expedition in learning the French tongue. So eager were these simple people to receive the truth, that he had to promise to take measures for their admission to the Sacrament of regeneration at his next voyage.

The extreme rigour of this first winter rendered it

* Nearly three centuries and a half have gone by since Jacques Cartier surveyed Hochelaga and its environs for the first time from the heights of Mount Royal. Could he view the same locality from the same stand-point to-day, how great would be his wonder at its transformation ! The mountain itself is now covered, both base and acclivities, with flourishing corn fields, fruitful orchards, and handsome residences, above which, to the very summit, trees grow in luxuriant variety. On the site of the Indian hamlet of the olden time, is a large, wealthy city ; its streets and squares adorned with remarkably fine buildings ; its busy ways thronged with an active, industrious, thriving population ; its port crowded with shipping and bordered with commodious quays ; its vast river spanned by the great tubular bridge, and traversed through its length and breadth by vessels of every build. The environs are in keeping with the city, combining natural beauty with the refinements of art and the improvements of industry. Nestling among rich woodlands, are gay villages, rural churches and pleasant villas, while thickly interspersed through fertile, well cultivated grounds, are pretty cottages, substantial farms and happy peasant homes. The living picture acquires additional animation from the constant movement of long rows of railway carriages, ever sending up light streams of transparent vapour which curl among the bright foliage, with a grace of their own, then fade away heavenwards. Could Jacques Cartier see it all, he might well wonder at time's changes !

a season of terrible suffering to the French ; sickness broke out amongst them and death thinned their ranks. Cartier had therefore no alternative but to conduct the discouraged survivors back to France early in spring. He determined to bring with him also some specimens of the natives whom he wished to present to the King. The practice of the time seemed to give a tacit sanction to the act, but it is much to be regretted that in carrying out his object, Cartier should have had recourse to stratagem. Donacona, one of the chiefs, was decoyed on board the French ship, with nine other savages, and borne away from his home in the wilds, which poor though it might be, was more precious to him than all the grandeur of the French King's capital. To pacify his people, he promised them before sailing away, that he would return after twelve moons, but save in dreams, he saw his beloved woods no more. With the exception of one little girl, all the exiles died in France, where, however, they were well treated, and had the happiness of being instructed in the faith and received into the Church.

On returning to Canada for the third time in 1540, Cartier found it difficult to resume his former intercourse with the natives, whom the disappearance of their chief had rendered distrustful and suspicious. Besides, he occupied only a subordinate position in this new expedition, the principal direction of which had been committed to the Lord of Roberval. The division of authority seems to have worked badly. Cartier had spent a year of inactivity in Canada before the Viceroy was prepared to join him, so seeing no prospect of success, he left for France, just

as Roberval reached Canada. Without the co-operation of his lieutenant, the leader could accomplish little; his expedition may indeed be said to have resulted only in corroborating the reality of the discoveries reported by the navigator of St. Malo. The purport of Cartier's fourth and last voyage, was to bring back to France the miserable remnant of the adventurers who had accompanied Roberval.

Though an apparent disappointment, the failure of the first attempt to colonize Canada was in reality a blessing. A few persons of good position had, it is true, joined Roberval's expedition, but it is equally certain that a considerable proportion of his recruits had been drawn from among the convicts of the French jails. Had the colony been then established, the mixture of such an element must have tainted its very source, and exercised an utterly demoralizing influence on its future. But God had designs of special mercy on Canada, so the day of her visitation was deferred, only that it might rise at a later period with a steadier, a clearer, and a more enduring light. Although Jacques Cartier failed in his immediate object, he succeeded in exploring a considerable part of the country, and as the first to open a way for missionaries to the hitherto unknown region, his claim to the gratitude of Catholic hearts should ever be recognised. He died at his peaceful home of Limoilou in Brittany, leaving the wilds of the West once more in undisputed possession of the native tribes.

During the next sixty years, the French took no active steps for the colonization of Canada. Their attempts under Henry II. and Charles IX., to form

settlements in Brazil and Florida, seem to have diverted their attention from New France, but they never quite forgot it, nor utterly relinquished the hope of one day founding a State on the St. Lawrence. Merchants from Dieppe and St. Malo continued to visit its shores, and from time to time, slight, ineffectual attempts at settlement were made. It was not, however, until 1608, that an expedition of any importance was organized. Monsieur des Monts, a Calvinist of wealth and rank, then received from Henry IV. the authority necessary for the purpose, and as an indemnity for consequent expenses, he also obtained the monopoly of the fur trade for one year. A company of merchants was immediately formed, and the command of the expedition given to the illustrious Samuel Champlain. Quebec, the Stadacona of Cartier, was decided on as the most advantageous site for the projected settlement, the destined cradle of the Canadian nation. There accordingly, Champlain unfurled the white banner on the 3rd of July, 1608. In the Algonquin tongue, "Kebec" signifies a strait, the St. Lawrence flowing at this point in a narrow channel between two high banks. The intended capital* of Canada could not have been more judiciously located. It possesses a magnificent harbour, navigable for the largest vessels, and capable of containing the most numerous fleet. The great river at its base forms a commodious highway of communication with the very heart of the continent, while in consequence of

* Quebec is now considered the military capital of Canada, Montreal ranking as the commercial metropolis, and Ottawa as the legislative.

the narrowing of the waters in its immediate vicinity, the citadel commands the passage. Quebec is thus the key of the great valley of the St. Lawrence, "the advanced guard," as the Abbé Ferland calls it in his History of Canada, of the vast French empire, which, according to the project of Louis XIV., was to extend from the Straits of Belle Isle to the Gulf of Mexico. The colony was not, however, to be established on a firm basis, until it had passed through much tribulation. Its early annals were to record an ordeal of trials, sickness, privation, hardship, destitution, alarms from the terrible Iroquois, molestation from the English, and finally, all but total extinction. They were to tell how the growth of the young nation had been checked, and its very existence threatened, by the bad faith of self-interested companies; worse than all, how, destined as it was for a bright star in the firmament of the Church, and a beacon light to the benighted heathen, its grand end had been temporarily frustrated by the frequent appointment of Calvinists for its patrons, and a mingling of the same sectarians among its small population. Then the page of triumph would come, and on it would be inscribed, how, like its own flower-enamelled meadows, bursting into bloom and beauty from beneath their pall of snow, Canada had emerged from its long moral winter, neither paralysed by the chill, nor depressed by the gloom, but glowing to its inmost heart with warm young life, and throbbing in every pulse with irrepressible energy and vigour.

Happily for the result of the undertaking, Champlain, its guiding spirit, was eminently qualified

for his position. Wise, as energetic; persevering, as enterprising; brave in reverse, as unassuming in success, he laid his plans with consummate prudence and carried them out with unwavering constancy. Disinterested, honourable and patriotic, he suffered no secret view of personal advantage to narrow his mind or mar his usefulness. Looking on his work as the work of God, and therefore believing implicitly in its final success, he threw his whole heart into it, devoting to it time, talents, wealth and life, and pursuing it with a courage that never quailed, and a heroism of self-sacrifice that never faltered. Profoundly religious, his great aim was to establish it on the solid foundation of faith and piety. For this end, he looked carefully from the beginning to the moral elements of the little society, and as far as his control extended, admitted among the early colonists only persons of irreproachable character. As soon as affairs appeared sufficiently promising, he invited missionaries to the spiritually destitute land. Four Franciscans answered the appeal, and on the 25th of June, 1615, to the great joy of the Catholic inhabitants, Mass was celebrated in Quebec for the first time since the days of Cartier and Roberval. In 1624, St. Joseph was solemnly chosen Patron of Canada, which from its birth has claimed devotion to the Holy Family and to St. Anne, as its devotion by excellence. The following year, the Recollet Fathers were joined by a little band of Jesuits, who came to fertilize the soil with martyrs' blood and win for themselves the martyrs' palm. Their arrival gradually prepared the way for the realization of the pious governor's first and dearest wish, the estab-

lishment of missions throughout the country. On these we shall touch in a future page.

Indefatigable in his zeal for the colony, Champlain made frequent voyages to France in its interests, undeterred by the inconveniences and even positive dangers then often attendant on travelling, and although he was subjected to constant petty annoyances from the selfishness and parsimony of the Company, the jealousy and rivalry of the traders, and the coolness and indifference of noble patrons, he never relaxed in his exertions, because ever sustained by trust in God and faith in his work. At great personal risk, and with incredible fatigue, he explored the country in all directions, observing, and afterwards describing its physical features, as well as the character and customs of the savages. From time to time, we even find him in arms against the dreaded Iroquois, but notwithstanding his super-human efforts, the colony could make but little progress while its destinies remained in the hands of mercenary agents, who were utterly regardless of its interests, and intent only on enriching themselves at its cost. After Quebec had been founded fourteen years, it still contained only fifty-five inhabitants, and its growth in all other respects had been proportionally tardy. Hope, however, began to brighten, when in 1627, the Canada Company was superseded by that of the Hundred Partners, with Richelieu at its head. This association was to hold Canada, as a feudal seigniory under the King, and with the right of soil, was to possess a monopoly of trade. In return for these privileges, it contracted the obligation of amply supplying the country with colonists, including

a sufficient number of artisans and labourers. It was also bound to provide for the support of a specified number of missionaries, and in general, to promote the welfare of the colony. Unfortunately, five years elapsed before it was ready to enter on the government of the province, which meantime was brought to the very verge of ruin, partly by famine, and partly by foreign invasion.

Much about the time of the transfer of Canada to the new Company, the Huguenots raised the standard of civil war in France, and being aided by England and Holland, their revolt soon assumed a formidable aspect. To complicate the difficulties of the mother country, a band of French Calvinists in the service of England determined to seize the favourable opportunity of invading her possessions in America. These were headed by Sir David Kerkt and his brothers, who procured the command of a small fleet of English vessels, and after devastating the coasts in the vicinity of Quebec, sent a summons to the Governor to surrender the town itself. Not having received supplies from France for three years, its resources were nearly exhausted, nevertheless, as Champlain was in hourly expectation of succour, he bravely determined to resist the summons and maintain his ground to the last. Before long, the people were reduced to a daily allowance of five ounces of bread; a little later, they were compelled to subsist on roots and herbs, yet still, even after hearing that the vessels containing the much needed supplies had been intercepted by the English, the resolute Commander never faltered. He encouraged his companions in misfortune by word and example;

exhorted them to patience ; cheerfully shared their privations, and strained every nerve to improve their condition. But although they struggled through the trying winter and spring, it was but too evident that without relief they could not hold out much longer ; when therefore the last hope was blighted by the wreck of two ships laden with provisions, the Governor, recognising the inutility of further resistance, accepted the only alternative left him, and at the second demand, surrendered the heroic little town, which amidst almost incredible difficulties had withstood the invaders an entire year. It was on the 20th of July, 1629, that the English took possession, and the following month, Champlain and his people embarked for England, whence, according to the terms of surrender, they were to be conveyed to France. One French family alone consented to remain in Quebec, and that only until after the next harvest. Thus it would seem as if a single step had brought us from Canada's cradle to her grave, for in what light can we look on those vessels bearing Champlain and the colonists from her shores, but as the tomb of the hopes lately so bright and buoyant ? It happened however that when Kerkt seized Quebec, he was ignorant of the triumph of Richelieu at La Rochelle ; unconscious therefore that the French Calvinist party was utterly crushed, and the long protracted civil war at an end. On landing at Plymouth in the following October, he learned to his dismay that peace had been concluded between England and France two months before the seizure of Quebec, the restitution of which had now become simply an obligation of justice. But although its

restoration was at once decided on, the measure was not carried out until 1632, when by the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, France secured a formal recognition of her right to Canada, including Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, or as they were then called, Acadia and Isle Royal. As it was evident that the interests of the country could not be in better hands than those of the great and good Champlain, happily for its future destiny, the government of the province was once more confided to him.

It was hard to have to begin his work anew, but he set about repairing the wreck around him with all his old energy and devotedness. While intent as ever on the material interests of the colony, those of religion were still his first concern. Fortunately, there was no longer a dominant Calvinist party in the country, to thwart his zealous projects, and molest the Catholics in the discharge of their duty to God. The era of Calvinist rule had passed; that of Catholic triumph had dawned. One of the Governor's first acts was to build a church which was dedicated to our Blessed Lady in honour of her Immaculate Conception. The facility thus afforded for the practice of religion was eagerly availed of by the new band of exclusively Catholic colonists. All approached the Sacraments at fixed intervals; morning and evening prayers were said in common in private families; the precepts of God and the Church were strictly observed. Stimulated by good example some who had been careless about religion in France devoted themselves earnestly to it in Canada. So admirable was the order which Champlain estab-

lished, that some years later a missioner wrote:— “Murder, robbery, usury, injustice, and similar crimes are heard of here only once a year, when, on the arrival of the ships from France, a newspaper account of them accidentally finds its way among us.” And, again, “Our churches are too small to contain the congregation; we have the consolation of seeing them filled to overflowing. By the grace of God, virtue walks here with head erect; it is in honour; vice alone in disrepute.” The infant Church of Canada seemed, indeed, to have revived the golden age of the Church of the Apostles. Under the direction of the Governor, the Fort was in some respects not unlike a monastery. The soldiers approached the Sacraments regularly; instructive books were read aloud at meals; duty was punctually discharged, and the well spent day was closed by night prayers said in common, and presided over by the Governor. He it was who introduced the custom, ever since religiously observed, of ringing the Angelus three times a day. He watched so carefully over the public and private interests of both French and Indians, that all looked on him as a father, and although continually appealed to for decisions between rival claimants, his integrity was never called in question. Uniting in his own person the functions and the authority of Governor, Legislator, and Judge, his power was necessarily great, but never was he known to abuse it. It was his maxim that the salvation of one single soul is of more importance than the subjugation of an Empire, and that the only object which kings should have in view in the conquest of idolatrous nations, is to lay

them as trophies at the feet of their Saviour Jesus Christ. This maxim is the key-note to his life; its practical influence was manifested in his zeal for the conversion of the Indians, and for the diffusion of a solidly religious spirit among the French population, and assuredly it is not the least of his claims to the gratitude of posterity, that the Canada of his formation has ever clung to her faith with so tenacious a grasp, that still she wears as her crown of highest honour, and proclaims as her proudest boast, the glorious title of Catholic Canada. The writers of his time are unanimous in ascribing to Champlain all the qualifications suited to the founder of a colony, and when, after a connection of thirty-two years with the country, he was summoned to his reward, on the 25th of December, 1635, he was followed to the grave, as well he might be, by the heartfelt regret of the whole colony, who looked on his death as the greatest of all calamities. After his demise, his widow founded the Ursuline Convent at Meaux, and there made her religious profession. During her residence in Canada, she had endeared herself both to French and Indians by her unvarying kindness and affability. Seeing their faces reflected in a small mirror which, according to the fashion of the day, she wore at her girdle, the poor savages were much delighted to find that she carried them all, as they said, in her heart. She learned the Algonquin tongue that she might teach the children their Catechism, and to the end of life retained a lively interest in the Canadian Mission.

Champlain was succeeded in the government of Quebec by Monsieur Charles de Montmagny, a man

distinguished alike for courage, ability, piety, and zeal. His first act on landing was to kneel at the foot of a cross erected on the road to the town, and there invoke the blessing and protection of heaven on the colony intrusted to his charge; thence he proceeded to the church to assist at the *Te Deum*. His second act on the same morning was to visit an Indian wigwam, and stand sponsor for an invalid who desired baptism, the greatest honour and sweetest consolation, he said, which he could have desired at his arrival in New France. His great aim from the beginning was to walk in the steps of his predecessor, and thus develop and consolidate the work so happily commenced. He maintained the moral and religious tone of society, by following up Champlain's plan of excluding disreputable and vicious characters. One of his first concerns was to build a seminary for the education of the Huron youth, an object which he knew to have been very dear to the heart of the late Governor. He also constructed a stone fort, strengthened the fortifications at Three Rivers, and traced a correct plan of the city, which as yet, it must be owned, existed only among the visions of hope. The Quebec of the Mother of the Incarnation was, indeed, widely different from that for which in after years, England and France contended, and Wolfe and Montcalm bled and died. At the time of which we write, it consisted of little more than a few rudely-constructed huts, and contained scarcely two hundred and fifty inhabitants, but we have dwelt thus long on its origin and early history because of its connection with the life and labours of the Venerable

Mother, which give interest to every least detail concerning it. We have now reached the date of its annals when Heaven was pleased to bless it with her presence; but before entering on her biography, a glance at the Indian portion of the population will be necessary to the completion of our little sketch of Canada as it was in her days.

All the tribes dispersed over the territory comprised in the basin of the St. Lawrence, were at this period divided into two groups, the Algonquin and Huron-Iroquois, classified according to their respective languages. To each of these mother tongues belonged dialects more or less numerous, according to the sub-divisions of the tribes who spoke them. The Algonquins were scattered under various names over perhaps more than a half of the territory south of the St. Lawrence and east of the Mississippi. Several branches of the same widely-extended family were also to be found wandering in Canada to the north of the St. Lawrence. The five confederate tribes of the Hurons inhabited the peninsula included between Lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario. The Iroquois stretched from the borders of Vermont to Western New York, and from the lakes, to the head waters of the Ohio, Susquehanna, and Delaware. They, too, formed a confederation of five tribes, and are commonly known as the Five Nations. The Hurons and the Iroquois are said to have received their names from the French—the former in allusion to the French word *hure*, a head of hair, these savages being distinguished by a singular mode of dressing theirs; the latter from their

frequent repetition of the word "*hiro*," "I have said it," the ordinary termination of the warriors' harangues.

When the early missionaries began to study the Indian dialects, they were much astonished to find them characterized by remarkable richness and variety of expression, as well as regularity of construction. Notwithstanding gradual alterations, they still retain much of their traditional character, being, in fact, less liable to change than written language, because of the ridicule with which the Indian visits any attempt at innovation on the point. One peculiarity of the American tongues is their singular power of extending the primitive signification of words by the addition of new syllables to the original term. Taking the verb for his starting point, the Indian is enabled, by prefixing, inserting, and adding syllables, to form at last some word which will not only express the action in question, but include at once, subject, object, time, place, and modifying circumstances. If he is shown an article with which he is unacquainted, he will ask its use, and then adding word to word at pleasure, he will at last give it a name comprising perhaps an entire definition. For sake of sound, the chain of words is sometimes linked by syllables of no particular significance. Strictly speaking, the Indian tongues consist only of the verb, which may be said to absorb all the other parts of speech. Declensions, articles, and cases are deficient; the adjective has a verbal termination; the idea expressed by the noun takes a verbal form; every thing is conjugated, nothing declined. The conjugation changes with every slight variation in the

action spoken of. For instance, the same word will not express two similar actions performed, the one on the water, the other on the land; or two similar actions, the one referring to a living, the other to an inanimate object; there must be a separate conjugation for each. The forms of the verb thus vary to infinity, and hence arose the immense difficulty to the missionaries of learning the languages.

A second peculiarity of the Indian dialects, is the abundant use which they allow of figurative language, a result of their total want of terms expressive of abstract, and purely spiritual ideas. To clothe these in words, they must have recourse to figures, chiefly metaphor and allegory, hence arises so much of what an American writer calls "the picturesque brilliancy" of the savage tongues. To express the term "prosperity," for example, the Indian will employ the image of a bright sun, a cloudless sky, or a calm river. "To make peace," will be "to smooth the forest path, to level the mountain, or to bury the tomahawk." "To console the bereaved by the offering of presents," will be "to cover the graves of the departed." Unconsciously, the Indian habitually speaks poetry. He knows nothing of written characters, so his method of writing is by hieroglyphics, or rude pictures traced on a stone or a piece of bark. In the Huron and Iroquois, the words are almost entirely composed of vowels, both languages being deficient in consonants, and totally wanting in labials. The Algonquin is also deficient in several letters, among others the consonants *f*, *l*, *v*, *x*, *z*. In the Indian tongues, many of the sounds

are merely guttural, and produced without any movement of the lips. *Ou*, as sounded in *you*, is of this description; to distinguish it from the articulated sounds, the early missionaries marked it by the figure 8.

The religion of the native tribes of North America was a species of pantheism. They believed that in every visible object dwelt good or evil spirits, who exercised a certain influence over human events, and they tried to propitiate them by sacrifices and prayers. Faith in dreams constituted the foundation of almost all their superstitions. The dream was to them an irrevocable decree which it was never allowable to slight. It, therefore, formed the starting point of their deliberations, and the basis of their decisions. Rather than reject the warning of a dream, they would have consigned to the flames or the waves the produce of a successful hunting or fishing expedition, or of a rich harvest. The most intelligent held as a theory that dreams are the speech of the soul, which through them manifests her innate desires, these desires remaining for ever unknown unless thus revealed. To carry out the dream was, therefore, to satisfy the soul's cravings; to slight it was to excite her desires afresh.

They believed that after death the soul wandered for a time in the vicinity of the body which it had quitted, and then departed on a long journey to a village in the direction of the setting sun. The country of the dead differed but little in their imagination, from the land of the living, and accordingly, looking on death merely as a passage from one region to another nearly similar, they met the summons with

indifference. The deceased warrior was placed outside his wigwam in a sitting posture, to show that although life was over, the principle of existence still survived, and in that position he was buried, together with his pipe, manitou, tomahawk, quiver, and bent bow, and a supply of maize and venison for his travels to the paradise of his ancestors. The mourning for near relatives lasted two years.

Among the Huron-Iroquois and Algonquins, liberty was uncontrolled. Each hamlet was independent; so was the head of each family in the hamlet; so was each child in the family. This mass of independent wills could be ruled only by persuasion and promises of reward, and of these the chief was lavish. Sometimes there were many rulers, or "captains," as they were called, in one hamlet, especially the larger ones; sometimes the government of the village was committed to a single chief. Among the principal tribes, the latter office was in general hereditary, though occasionally conferred by election. Public affairs were discussed in council with great formality, and votes taken by straws or small reeds, the majority theoretically deciding the question, but the conclusion was not carried out unless all agreed. The rebellious were generally won over by presents or flattery.

The savage tribes were divided into several great families, each distinguished by the name of some animal chosen by the chief as his *totum* or distinctive mark. Among the Iroquois, for instance, the highest family was that of the Tortoise; the second of the Beaver, and the third of the Wolf. In battle, the *totum* was borne as the standard. The criminal

code was not very elaborate, yet it sufficed to maintain order in the small republics. Murder, robbery, treason and sorcery were the crimes understood to entail its penalties. Instead of being punished by death, murder was expiated by a very large number of presents, to provide which, not only the assassin, but every family in the village was laid under contribution. The punishment of the criminal was thus multiplied by the reproaches and sarcasms of all the unwilling sharers in the atonement. Among the Algonquins, stealing was of rare occurrence ; the Hurons, on the contrary, prided themselves on their feats in that line. They stole for the mere pleasure of stealing, and so accomplished were they in the art, that they could purloin an article under the very eye of the owner, using the foot for the purpose, quite as dexterously as the hand. If the thief could be identified, the person robbed might despoil him of everything he possessed, supposing always he was not strong enough to defend himself. If he belonged to another village, goods to the value of those lost might be taken from any one in his village, and kept until the robber had made restitution. Traitors and sorcerers, as objects of special dread, were always liable to heavy penalties.

According to the savage code of honour, war was the only road to glory ; it was in consequence frequent, and once begun, lasted for years, national hatred descending as a legacy from generation to generation. Stealth and cunning entered largely into the tactics of the Indians ; to lie in ambush was their delight ; to surprise the enemy, their grand triumph. The assailants advanced in single file, the

last carefully strewing leaves on the footprints of those who had preceded. When they had discovered the enemy, they crept on all-fours until near enough for the attack, then suddenly bounding up, and yelling fearfully, they rushed forward to the onslaught. If the enemy were on his guard, they withdrew noiselessly; if retreat were impossible, they fought with desperation. The number of foes overcome, was marked by that of the scalps hanging as trophies of bloody triumph from the girdles of the savage victors. Their arms were a species of javelin, a bow and arrow, the latter tipped with a sharp bone or flint, and the dreaded tomahawk or head-breaker. But more important to the warrior than all besides was his manitou, or the symbol of his familiar spirit,—some fantastic object represented in a dream, or selected according to his peculiar taste; a bird's head, it might have been, a beaver's tooth, or the knot of a tree; whatever it was, the warrior would as little have thought of going to battle without arms, as without it. They treated their prisoners with great cruelty, partly it is said from the superstitious belief that the manes of their fallen companions were soothed by the sufferings of the captives. The prisoners who were not sacrificed, were adopted into the tribes in place of the slain, and treated thenceforth as members of the family.

The savages of North America were well formed and finely proportioned. They considered painting the face and tattooing the person, so great an addition to their personal charms, that jealous of the adornment, they denied it to the women. The skins of beasts formed their ordinary attire; their shoes

were of the same material, but prepared for the purpose by a particular process. The women were likewise clad in skins, which on festive occasions they ornamented elaborately. They often displayed much taste and skill in embroidering ornamental works on bark or skin.

The dwelling was the wigwam, easily constructed and easily removed. Long poles fixed in the ground and bent inwards at the upper end, were covered outside with bark, and inside with mats; a loose skin was attached for the door, an opening left at the top for the chimney, and the house was built. In the larger hamlets, such as that of Hochelaga, described by Cartier, the dwellings ran along a sort of gallery, sometimes nearly two hundred feet long and thirty wide; in these several families could be accommodated. A raised platform was introduced into some, as a kind of upper story, serving for sleeping apartments.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the savages were subject to but few maladies, and these they cured by natural remedies, the indigenous medicinal plants, abstemious diet, and vapour baths of their own invention forming the basis of all prescriptions. Of persons skilled in the medical art, there was no scarcity, every cabin generally containing several. But not always satisfied with natural remedies, the patients had frequent recourse to the juggler or "medicine man," to discover the magical source of their illness, and avert evil consequences. The medicine man was likewise consulted on the issue of future events, and his mysterious predictions were

received as so many oracles, his wondrous spells looked on as so many talismans.

The husband's duty was to hunt and fish, leaving his venison at the cabin door, and his fish at the water's edge, to be thence removed by his wife. He had also to construct and repair the canoe, and provide wood and bark for building the hut,—that was all. Most of his time was passed in listless lounging, or in games of hazard at which he often staked his whole possessions. His wife was mistress of the wigwam, and on her it devolved to draw the water, hew the wood, dress the food, prepare the ground to receive the grain, sow and gather in the harvest, weave the mats, make the rude garments of the family, and in their frequent journeys, to bear the house on her shoulders, not figuratively, but very literally. Her lord was supposed to carry nothing but his arms; if particularly condescending, he might of his own accord deviate from the rule without compromise of dignity.

Among the North American Indians in general, woman was considered a being of an inferior order, created only to obey the caprices of man, yet by a strange contradiction, the children belonged to the mother, and recognising only her authority, looked on their father merely in the light of a guest permitted to occupy a place in the cabin. In return, the squaw loved her offspring with passionate fondness, not manifested perhaps by demonstrative caresses, but not on that account the less tender, vigilant, or enduring. At home or abroad, she never parted from her nursling. When she travelled, she lifted her black-eyed babe to her shoulders, gaily-

decked cradle and all, and so they journeyed on happily together, her great love divesting the burden of all weight. When she worked in the fields, she laid it at her feet among the sweet wild flowers, or she swung it from the bough of some pleasant shady tree close by, but never under any circumstances did she entrust it to other care than her own. Parental love indeed often degenerated into weakness among the Indians, and proved one of the great obstacles to the formation of schools by the missionaries. Unable to bear separation from their little ones, the parents soon recalled them home. As the children grew, they were left to do pretty much as they pleased. They received no moral instruction, but in order to excite their emulation, they were duly initiated in the illustrious deeds of their ancestors, in whose footsteps they were supposed to follow. For the correction of their faults, the mother employed prayers and tears, but never threats or punishment; these, their independent spirits would not have brooked. The severest chastisement ever inflicted was a dash of cold water in the face. The naturally unexcitable temperament of the Indians served as an antidote to the defects of their rearing. Reason early taught them the necessity of self-control, and so it happened, that at the age when the character is formed, they presented a strange combination of good and bad qualities.

First among the virtues of the savages was fortitude. Fitted by their stern nature and their early habits to support privation and pain, they would exhibit the very stoicism of endurance under the extreme of both. Without a word of complaint they

would bear the pangs of hunger for ten or fifteen days, sometimes in compliance with a superstition, but very frequently from necessity too. They would glory in dying without a groan amidst inconceivable agonies. They seemed insensible to cold, heat, fatigue, sickness, and every other species of physical suffering. To inure themselves early to the torture of fire, boys and girls of ten and twelve would place a live coal on their joined arms, the palm of courage being, of course, for the one who bore the pain longest without letting the coal fall.

Hospitality they exercised in the style of the patriarchs. By day and by night, the guest, whether stranger or friend, was welcome to the best place in the wigwam, and to the choicest portion of the family stores. If a stranger, he was visited by all the notabilities of the village, and at the subsequent entertainments given in his honour, was treated with marked distinction. The Indians were ever ready to divide their possessions with those in greater need, and especially prompt to relieve the widow and the orphan. "Their life is so void of care," remarked an old writer, "and they are so loving also, that they make use of those things which they enjoy as common goods, and are therein so compassionate, that rather than one should starve, all would starve." With a courtesy of which they might have been supposed incapable, they paid visits of condolence, as a matter of course, to all in affliction. When they offered their sympathy on the occasion of death, the departed was never named, lest so direct an allusion might wound the sensitive feelings of the bereaved ; he was spoken of only as

"the one who has left us." They were remarkable for their reverence for the sepulchres of their kindred, and would travel miles to visit some tomb in the woods, where, according to their traditions, the bones of their ancestors had been deposited. When the graves were within reach, it was a practice of some of the tribes to keep them in the neatest order, the grass closely mown, and the weeds and brambles carefully removed. The Hurons honoured their dead by a special festival, celebrated every ten or twelve years at some hamlet decided on in general council. On this occasion, each family brought to the place appointed the bones of the relatives who had died since the last celebration. These remains of mortality had been previously washed, then wrapped in beaver skins ornamented with shell work or embroidery. A common grave was ready to receive them, and on its preparation, no pains had been spared. It was lined throughout with rich furs, and partially filled with various presents, including articles both of ornament and of use. The venerated remains were respectfully laid on these; then followed, layer after layer, another supply of presents, a store of provisions, and finally, a covering of bark, the whole surmounted by a mound of earth. Over all a roof was raised, to protect the precious deposit from the cold and snow of winter, and the rain and heat of summer.

So greatly did the Indians prize domestic peace and harmony, that to maintain it in their little communities, they often carried forbearance and self-control to the last extreme.

So many good qualities combined assuredly prove

the accuracy of the remark of Washington Irving that "although there seems but little soil in the Indian's heart for the growth of the kindly virtues, if we would penetrate through the proud stoicism and habitual taciturnity which hide his character from casual observers, we should find him linked to his fellow-men of civilized life by more of those sympathies and affections than are usually ascribed to him." Much in the same spirit, Father Smet writes—"The Indians are in general little known in the civilized world. People judge by those whom they see on the frontiers, the mere wrecks and remnants of once powerful tribes. Among these the 'fire-water' and the degrading vices of the whites have wrought sad ruin. The farther one penetrates into the desert, the better he finds the aborigines, and the more worthy and desirous to receive religious instruction."

Among the evil impulses of the Red Man's nature, pride and revenge were predominant. Fostered and strengthened by indulgence, as well as by the peculiar nature of early training, these passions finally acquired so great a dominion, that to gratify either, the savages would have sacrificed all they held most dear. They were fond of praise too, and although they declared themselves indifferent to general opinion, their constant fear of provoking an unfavourable one, rendered them, in truth, its slaves. In their dealings with the whites, they were often found false, treacherous, and regardless of promises and treaties, although in domestic intercourse they were not in general deceitful. In extenuation, it must be remembered that from their

earliest years, they were not only initiated in stratagem by the necessity of self-defence, but taught to look on every exhibition of craft and cunning as a triumph of skill and a worthy subject of admiration. And again, it is but too true that the example of the more enlightened Europeans was not always calculated to inspire them with respect for truth. Another ground of accusation against the Indians was their barbarity to the vanquished. This originated partly in policy and superstition, but from the era of European aggression, savage cruelty needed no other stimulus than the desire of revenge.

In the long journeys of the Indians, whether for war or the chase, the sun, moon, and stars answered the purpose of time-piece and compass. Distant periods they calculated by the solar year, but for short intervals they reckoned by lunations. They had observed and even given names to the principal constellations. Among the Iroquois, the Pleiades were called the "Dancers;" the Milky Way, "the Path of Souls;" the Great Bear had a name corresponding with that which we give it; the Polar Star was designated as "the star that never sets;" it served to guide them in their long marches through the forests and across the great prairies of the west. When the sky was clouded, they were led through the woods by certain infallible signs—indeed by a species of instinct—besides which, their memory of places was so wonderful that, after once visiting any locality, they ever after retained a perfectly distinct recollection of it. They preferred water to land travelling, possessing thorough command of their light bark canoe, which they could direct with ease

and security amidst the most formidable rapids. If they came to an absolutely impassable spot, they raised the slight vessel on their shoulders and carried it until they reached the next navigable point.

Christianity produced a wonderful change in these wild children of the woods, developing all that was good in their nature, correcting what was evil, and softening down much of what was harsh, but when the Mother of the Incarnation arrived in Canada, it had made but little progress. As early as 1615, it is true, Père Caron, a Recollet, had penetrated to the Huron land, and, during the succeeding years, he and his religious brethren had laboured at intervals for the conversion of its inhabitants, but although their zeal was ardent, their success had been only very partial. Unlike the tribes of whom Jacques Cartier speaks, these manifested so strong an opposition to the dogmas of the Catholic faith, that it was evident many years must elapse before they would be disposed to embrace it. Although the most intelligent of all the North American tribes, and the most susceptible of ordinary instruction, the Hurons appeared absolutely inaccessible to religious teaching.

The plan of the missionaries in the northern continent was to try and gain access to some Indian village, and, this point attained, to build a cabin and as soon as opportunity offered, announce the Word of God to all who would receive it. Gradually a little congregation was formed around them, but the tie between the converts and their heathen relatives was not severed, both continuing to associate; neither was the original name of the village changed; it merely received in addition that of the

particular saint who had been chosen as its patron. In South America, on the contrary, it was the practice of the missionaries to prepare settlements, or "reductions," as they were called, to which they attracted their neophytes, whom they induced to live in community.

In the year 1634, the three Jesuit Fathers, Brébœuf, Daniel, and Davost, succeeded in establishing themselves in the village of Ibonhatiria, in the land of the Hurons, and there, in a very poor little chapel dedicated to St. Joseph, they planted the seed of that interesting portion of the early Canadian Church, the Huron Mission. In a year after, they were joined by Père Jogues. When the Venerable Mother arrived, five years had passed over that precious seed, and it had given scarcely a sign of life, nor did it for long afterwards. The efforts of the Fathers were everywhere thwarted—prejudice, superstition, ignorance, and vice all rose in arms against them. They were accounted sorcerers; the breaking out of the dreaded small-pox was attributed to their magic arts, and they once owed their escape from a sentence of death only to the intervention of a friendly Indian. But the blood of a martyr was to fertilize the seed of Christianity in the New World, as in primitive times it had so often done in the Old. Père Jogues was seized by the Iroquois, and after enduring torments which only the ingenuity of savage barbarity could have invented, he wonderfully escaped alive from their hands. In 1646 he was sent to found a mission in the heart of the Iroquois land itself—a mission which was to be dedicated to, and appropriately named after, the

holy Martyrs. "I shall go," he said, on receiving the order; "I shall go, but I shall not return." The words were prophetic; his own blood was the first to water the mission of the holy martyrs, and, as might have been anticipated, its eloquent voice pierced the heavens. It had scarcely sent up its pleadings, when the work of conversion among the Hurons began in earnest. Missionary stations multiplied rapidly. The Christianized villages of St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Ignatius, and St. John smiled in the desert like green spots amidst the barren sands. At the central station of St. Mary's alone, three thousand Indians received hospitality in the course of one year. Undeterred by the certainty of privation and suffering, new missionaries continued to swell the ranks and aid the work. With indefatigable zeal and unwearied patience, they catechised, exhorted, consoled, encouraged. The morning hours, from four until eight, were reserved for their private devotions; the remainder of the day belonged to the neophytes. Like St. Francis Xavier, Père Brebœuf would walk through the villages and their environs, ringing a bell to summon the warriors to a conference. Seated round the good Father under the pleasant shade of their own ancient forest trees, they would drink in his words and joyfully accept his doctrines. "When I escaped some particular danger," a brave would remark, "I said to myself, 'A powerful spirit watches over me.' Now I know that my Protector was the great God of whom you tell us." The first desire and aim of the converts was to bring as many of their nation as possible to the faith; and so wondrously rapid was

its diffusion, that within two years after the martyrdom of Père Jogues, the whole Huron nation was converted.

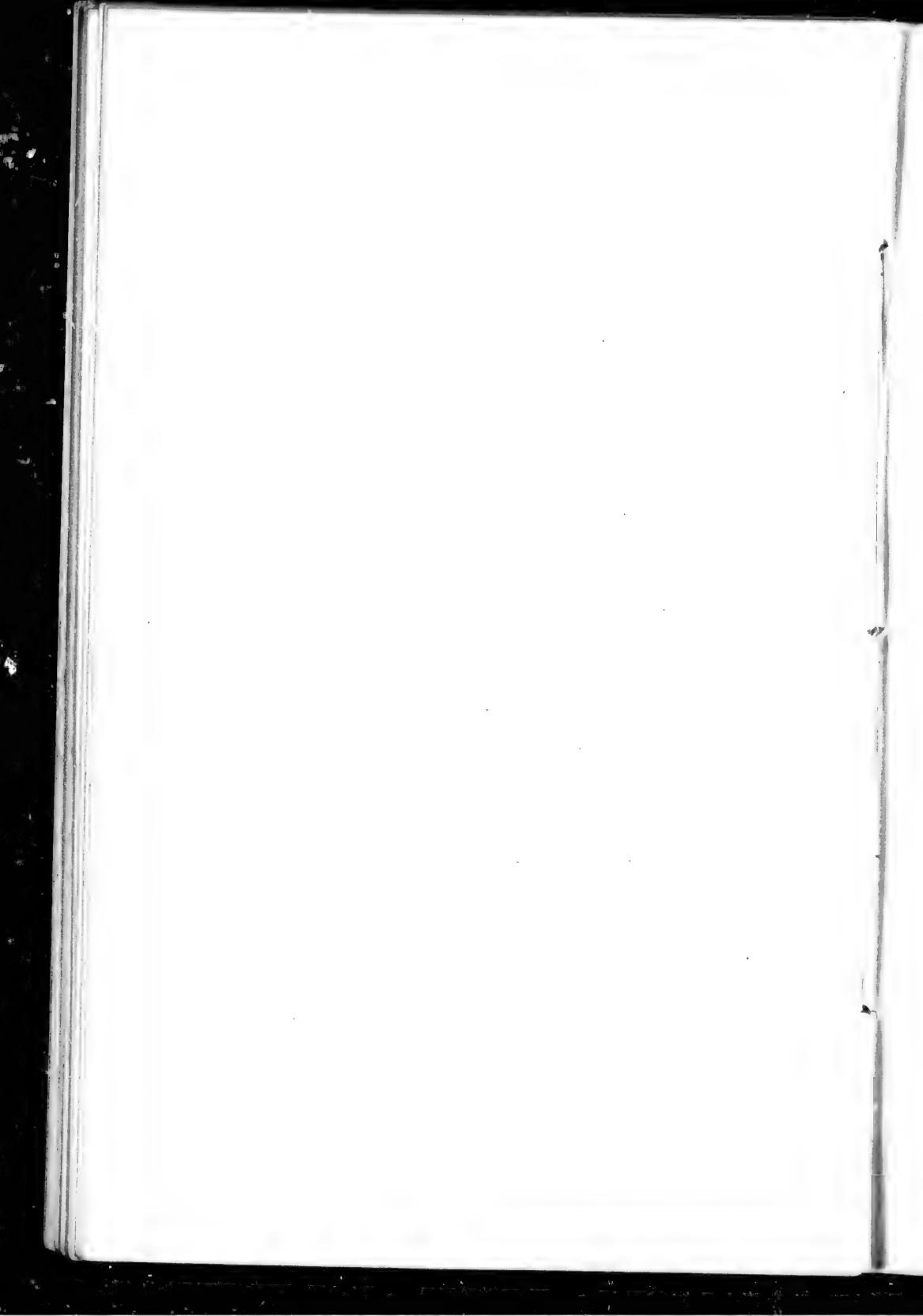
The harvest had taken long to ripen, but in compensation it was so rich, that only the golden garners seemed fit to receive it, and to these, accordingly, the Almighty Master of the vineyard was pleased speedily to transfer it. The Iroquois had long maintained a deadly enmity to the Hurons, and frequent bloodshed had necessarily been its consequence; but, no longer satisfied with partial vengeance, they resolved in the year 1648 on carrying on a war of absolute extermination into the Huron territory itself. They chose for their incursion the season when all the Huron warriors were absent on the chase, and no one left in the hamlets but women, children, and aged men. The village of St. Joseph, with its venerable pastor, Father Daniel, at once fell a prey to their terrible fury. The following year the villages of St. Louis and St. Ignatius shared the same fate, and all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, were slain. Fathers Bréboeuf and Lalemant were included in the general massacre, but their deaths were marked by an exceptional refinement of barbarity. In explanation of the bitter hatred of the Iroquois to the French, we learn that about a year after his arrival in Canada, Champlain had provoked their hostility by entering into an alliance with the Algonquins and Hurons, their traditional foes. The step was taken in choice of the lesser of two evils, for unless conciliated, it seemed but natural to expect that the Algonquins, as the nearest neighbours, would prove the most dangerous enemies.

Wise as may have been the motive, the act led to disastrous results.

After the almost total annihilation of their nation, a part of the surviving Hurons descended the St. Lawrence to Quebec, in the environs of which their posterity is still to be seen; another portion was adopted into the nation of the conquerors on equal terms, and the rest dispersed. Many of those admitted into the enemy's tribe were Christians, and not only did they preserve their faith in exile, but they were the happy means of drawing to it many of their new allies. Several years after, missionaries were amazed and charmed at finding a little band of fervent Christians in the very centre of heathen vice and barbarism. The exiled Hurons who sought an asylum in Quebec were located in the Isle of Orleans, to which they gave the name of St. Mary's, in memory of their old and still dearly-cherished home. Our limits do not permit us to dwell on the heroism of the missionaries in the daily, hourly sacrifices of their crucified lives, ending for very many among them in death by a cruel martyrdom. The record fills one among the many beautiful pages in the annals of the sons of St. Ignatius. Commenting on their glorious work, the historian, Bancroft, remarks that "the history of their labours is connected with the origin of every celebrated town within the limits of French Canada. Not a cape was turned," he says, "not a river entered, but a Jesuit led the way." This, however, is but secondary merit; their true glory is in having led the way to heaven for innumerable souls who will for ever bless their charity, and sing praise to Him who inspired it.

Before the arrival of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, missions for the converted Indians had sprung up under their direction in and about Quebec and along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The most remarkable of the former was that called St. Joseph of Sillery, in honour of the patron of Canada, to whom it was dedicated, and of Monsieur de Sillery,* its munificent founder. A few savage families lived happily in this peaceful hamlet, fervently discharging their duty as Christians, and insensibly falling into the spirit and usages of civilized life. These converts were chiefly from among the Algonquins proper, and the kindred tribe of the Montagnais. As the desire for the conversion of the Indians strengthened, so did the conviction that the work must begin with the systematic religious training of the children. Thanks to the zeal and charity of the lamented Champlain, a step had been taken in this direction for the benefit of the Indian boys;—that a similar advantage might be extended to the girls, had long been the prayer of all who sighed for the coming of the Kingdom of God among the heathens of Canada. And God heard the prayer, and in his own time He sent His mercy and His blessing to the heathen land in the person of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, whose wondrous call, and faithful co-operation will engage our attention in the following pages, a tribute of filial love and reverence to her saintly memory.

* After having been Ambassador for France at the Spanish and Papal Courts, Monsieur de Sillery was appointed Prime Minister of Louis XIII. He finally renounced the world, and embraced the ecclesiastical state.



THE LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION.

FIRST PERIOD, 1599—1631.
HER LIFE IN THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

HER BIRTH, PARENTAGE, INFANCY, CHILDHOOD AND
YOUTH.

THE world of nature is no doubt very beautiful in itself, and very wonderful in its works, yet infinitely surpassing it, both in intrinsic loveliness and in magnificence of production, is the world of grace. It is in that world that the saints are formed, and compared with the grandeur of the work of grace in the sanctification of a soul, all the splendours of this material universe fade to nothing. When grace forms a saint it restores the beauty, and renews the purity which were the dowry of the soul before the fall. For this end, it has to transform man from a terrestrial into a heavenly being, elevating what is low in his fallen nature, correcting what is evil, spiritualizing what is earthly, improving what is good,—re-forming, re-moulding, and in a manner re-creating.

Considering the subjects on which divine grace has to act, and the opposition which it has to encounter, this, its work in the saints, may well be called the most wonderful of all works, and its triumph the grandest of all triumphs. Unseen and unheeded

though it may be, that divine work is ever silently, but surely and steadily progressing in the spiritual world over which grace rules. We can see it in its development, if not in its actual operation, and if so minded, can estimate its magnitude by examining its results in the annals of the saints.

Those annals are of a singularly diversified character. They comprise the history of once rebellious souls won by the sweet attractions of grace from every part of the empire of Satan, and by a strange contrast, they at the same time record that of faithful souls, who, upheld by its strength, never swerved from their allegiance to God. They tell of saintly penitents, dating their first correspondence with its inspirations from the eleventh hour, and of docile hearts, obedient from earliest childhood to its voice. They show us, side by side, profaned temples re-consecrated, and holy sanctuaries never sullied ; scentless flowers restored to fragrance, and garlands of purity from which not a blossom or even a leaf had ever fallen. In different ways both manifest the magnificence of the riches of divine grace. In different ways, both prove that whether grace changes a sinner into a saint, or preserves a saint from sin, it is pre-eminently the worker of wonders. If the catalogue of holy penitents forms a dazzling page in its record, so does that of the privileged few who never lost their baptismal innocence. While the one is traced in characters of mercy, the other is written in letters of light. While the one reveals the grandeur, and the other the sweetness of the work of grace, both concur in proclaiming the triumph of its omnipotence.

In obdurate wills subdued, the conquests of grace are often hard to win. In the docile souls of the early sanctified, its task is easy. Into these, its inspirations sink as the soft dew into good soil, and with the same result. Finding in them no impediment to its action, no check to its liberality, it is free to pour out the wealth of its exhaustless treasury, and so it leads them from virtue to virtue, from height to height, even to the sublimity of perfection and the consummation of divine union, when, resplendent with heavenly light, and dazzling with interior beauty, they excite the admiration, nay, perhaps even the wonder of the angels.

To this bright page of the annals of the work of grace belongs the name of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation, whose history is about to engage us.

As we follow the progress of the great work of God in her soul, noting, on the one hand, the rich abundance of heavenly inspiration, and, on the other, the perfection of her fidelity, let us not be satisfied with simply admiring the one, but let us set ourselves in earnest to imitate the other, according to our measure and degree.

She was born in the historic city of Tours on the 28th of October 1599. With the very gift of life itself, she received an accompanying protecting grace in the blessing of good, religious parents. Her father, Florence Guyart, was noted among his fellow-citizens for piety, integrity, and uprightness, but although richly endowed with the treasures of virtue, he was but indifferently provided with those of fortune, his business as a silk-mercer supplying him barely with a competency. Her mother, Jeanne

Michelet, was of the noble house of Babou de la Bourdaisière, to which France was once indebted for some of her eminent ecclesiastics and statesmen, but at the period of the birth of her holy child, she ranked—like the royally descended Virgin of Juda at the birth of Christ—only among other obscure individuals of the middle class.

The predestined infant received baptism on the day after her birth, in the church of St. Saturninus, and with it the name of Mary, a happy presage, as one of her biographers remarks, of her life-long, most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as well as of the singular favours which that generous Mother reserved for her well-loved child. It was her happiness to be surrounded from earliest infancy with none but holy influences, and to breathe from her very cradle an atmosphere of purity. The first words which she heard, the first she tried to lisp, were the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. The first bent she received was an inclination to virtue ; the first and only examples she witnessed were examples of piety. Thus passed the years preceding the dawn of reason, her beautiful soul expanding under the combined action of the baptismal grace, and of favourable external influences, like a bud of rich promise in the bright spring sunshine ; then the clouds of infancy cleared away, and the light of reason shone. Her good mother seized the all-important moment to direct the child's opening mind to the knowledge of God, and her fresh, pure heart to His love, a grace for which the Venerable Mother returned Him very earnest thanks in after life, remarking that early impressions of religion are a most precious favour,

and a strong predisposition to future sanctity. Truly it was a picture to delight the angels, that Christian mother so carefully directing the first feeble steps of her little child along the road that leads to God, and that docile child eagerly watching the guardian hand, and steadily treading the path to which it pointed,—the sure and blessed path of holiness, from which throughout life's long journey, she was never even once to swerve.

The crowning grace of this privileged infancy was, however, yet to come. Our Lord, whose Spirit breatheth where He will, had chosen that little child to be in an especial manner all His own, and He desired to secure possession of her soul while yet it looked so lovely, all glistening with the baptismal dew in the morning light of its young purity. But as the gift of the heart, to be acceptable, must be voluntary, her concurrence in His designs of mercy had to be asked. Neither, however, to visible or invisible guardian angel would He intrust the invitation, which, to crown His infinite condescension, was to come from Himself in person. She has left us a touchingly simple description of the extraordinary favour referred to, which she always looked on as the first link in the chain of her vocation to the mystic life, and prized accordingly.

"I was only about seven years old," she says, "when one night in sleep, I seemed to myself to be in the courtyard of a country school with one of my young companions. My eyes were fixed on the heavens, when suddenly I saw them opened, and our Lord Jesus Christ descending towards me through the air. As His most adorable Majesty drew near,

I felt my heart all on fire with His love, and eagerly stretched out my arms to Him. The most lovely above the sons of men, beautiful and attractive beyond description, lovingly embraced me, and then He asked, 'Wilt thou be mine?' I answered, 'yes,' and having thus received my consent, He re-ascended in our sight to heaven. When I awoke, my soul was so ravished with joy at this unspeakable favour, that in my childish simplicity, I detailed the wonderful particulars to all who would listen to me. The sweet words of our Blessed Lord remained ever indelibly engraven on my memory, and so completely did they absorb my attention, that although I saw His sacred Humanity, I afterwards retained no distinct impression concerning it."

It was an important crisis in the child's spiritual life, that heavenly vision, for on its results depended the bent and colouring of her future career. By her ready compliance with the invitation of divine grace, she subjected her whole will unreservedly and for ever to the dominion of her Lord, and thus left Him free to carry out His yet unrevealed designs for her personal sanctification, and the salvation of innumerable souls bound up with hers. Henceforth, His divine inspirations would find no impediment to their action in the docile heart of that little child.

According to St. Bernard, the embrace of God means His Holy Spirit. To embrace a soul, and to give her His Spirit, are then in God identical acts. By the embrace noted in the vision, the Holy Ghost took possession of the heart of His chosen Spouse in quality of her Director, and although unacquainted as yet with the secrets, and even the name of the

interior life, she found herself guided along its paths by that divine Master, as steadily and securely as if she had been led by a visible hand. In her doubts, she consulted Him with great simplicity, and never failed to receive the light which she needed for her practical direction ; light so clear and vivid, that it sometimes carried with it the force almost of demonstration. This supernatural guidance, commenced thus early, and continued through life, may be ranked among the most eminent of her great spiritual privileges. But although the first, it was not the only favour conferred on her by our Lord at His most gracious visit. Other precious, practical effects of that visit were to disengage her heart from the amusements in general so eagerly sought by children of her age; to confirm her desire of virtue; to develop her love of retirement and prayer; to intensify her hatred of sin, and strengthen her resolution to guard with jealous care the holy treasure of her baptismal innocence. The embrace vouchsafed her by our Lord, so embalmed her soul with sweetness, so inflamed her heart with love, that she ceased not thenceforth to "run after Him in the odour of His perfumes," and so readily did her thoughts and affections turn to Him, their Centre, that it would seem as if in vanishing from her sight in the vision just referred to, He had taken both back to heaven with Himself. Her delight was to resort to the most solitary places and the least frequented churches, that she might enjoy with less interruption the sweets of communion with Him. Struck by the humble and respectful attitudes of pious persons whom she met in the church, and believing that God

must certainly grant the petitions of those who prayed with so much reverence, she at once set about imitating them; and no doubt, even indifferent observers must have been impressed by the sight of a child between nine and ten years of age spending long hours on her knees before the tabernacle, her little hands devoutly joined, her soul absorbed as if in ecstasy, and her very countenance wearing a seraphic expression. She spoke of her childish wants with simple confidence to our Lord and His Blessed Mother, and every day she asked that dear Mother that she might see her at least before death. From constant association with Him who is the joy of the angels, and the sweetness of the saints, her naturally bright disposition grew the brighter, and her engaging amiability and artless courtesy, the more striking and attractive.

She early manifested a singular reverence and love for religious instruction. Having heard that God speaks through the preachers of His word, she conceived so profound a veneration for their office and their person, that when she met one of them in the street, she would have followed him to kiss the traces of his steps, had she not been restrained by the fear of observation. Without understanding much of what was said in sermons, she still loved to listen to them, and on her return home, would repeat what she had retained, adding her own simple ideas and reflections. As she grew older, and therefore better able to take in their meaning, her heart, she says, seemed to her like a vessel into which the word of God poured in the manner of a liquid into a vase. Like the brimming vase,

her soul so overflowed with heavenly emotions, that unable to contain their abundance, she was constrained to give them vent in prayer, or in humble efforts to impart some of her treasures to other souls. This early inclination for receiving and communicating religious instruction, was a pre-disposition for the grand work which the future reserved for her, and when, after the lapse of many years, her destiny had associated her with the generous missionaries who bore the knowledge of the name of Christ to infidel lands, she recalled the aspirations of childhood's days, in which, as she says, her heart had followed the ministers of the Gospel to the scenes of their labours, and her mind had been more engrossed by their noble deeds, than by the events actually passing around her.

Daily more intent on excluding from the solitude of her soul every distracting thought and care, thus the better to dispose it for the permanent abode of the divine Guest who will have the heart to Himself, she withdrew more and more from all intercourse with creatures, except that required by charity and courtesy. Seeing in the recreative reading provided for her by her parents, an obstacle to recollection and a waste of time, she totally laid it aside, substituting for books of mere amusement, those which treated of spiritual subjects.

As she advanced in years, the love of God which inflamed her soul sought a vent not only in her almost uninterrupted communications with the divine Object of her affections, but in exterior active works of charity towards her neighbour. The tabernacle and the poor were the two magnets that

attracted her heart, and next to the hours spent before the altar, none yielded her such pure delight as those passed among the lowly, suffering members of her dear Saviour. She found no company so congenial as theirs; no occupation so agreeable as the humble services which their desolate condition required. She fed, clothed and consoled them, and even sometimes partook of their poor fare, reserving for her own share their remnants and refuse. She would have been glad to suffer in their stead, and says, that but for the uprightness of her intention, she might sometimes have erred by excess of liberality towards them.

Going one day, as usual, on a mission of charity, she inadvertently passed too near a cart which some workmen were in the act of loading. Not seeing her, they raised the vehicle so suddenly, that her sleeve was caught in the shaft, and after being lifted into the air, she was dashed back violently to the ground. The terrified spectators concluded that she must have been killed, but she had not received the least injury, a favour for which, as the Almighty revealed to her, she was indebted to her love for the poor.

After some years, we hear of the first notable imperfection of her childhood and youth, and nothing perhaps gives a more accurate idea of her innocence, than the gravity which that imperfection assumed in her estimation. The singular degree of supernatural light vouchsafed her, the sublimity of interior purity to which she was called, and the height of the virtue to which she had already attained, explain the reproaches of the Holy Spirit, and her own keen remorse for an infidelity which

appears trivial to us because of our want of enlightenment in the ways of God.

In her childish recreations, it had been her favourite amusement to copy the devotional practices which she had witnessed at Church; to kneel, to prostrate, to clasp her hands, to raise her eyes to heaven, to strike her breast; in short, to repeat as a pastime what she had seen done at prayer. In ordinary children, a fancy for such diversions is often considered a happy presage of a future vocation to the ecclesiastical or religious state, but in her enlightened eyes, these childish follies seemed inconsistent with the gravity and reserve becoming one so favoured as she had been. Viewed in this aspect, they appeared to her, not as sins certainly, but as imperfections; light vapours, it is true, but vapours still, and therefore capable of intercepting to some extent the rays of the eternal Sun of justice. It was not until her sixteenth year that her early pastimes struck her as reprehensible, and then, with the new light, there came a second to the effect, that although deliberate sin alone forms necessary matter for confession, an imperfection like that recorded might lawfully find a place in the self-accusations of one, destined as she was, for an exceptional degree of purity of soul. No positive duty however, required the sacrifice of natural feeling involved in the latter course, therefore she hesitated for awhile to adopt it, thus for the first time balancing the repugnances of nature against the inspirations of grace. But the Spouse of souls will admit no reservation in those whom He has chosen to be all His own, and we learn from herself, that by this infidelity, she interrupted for a time the

fulness of the flow of divine liberality in her regard, and checked the freedom and rapidity of her progress to God. To all but herself, however, that progress was very apparent, furnishing matter of wonder and admiration, no less than of edification.

Only two convents existed at that period in the city of Tours; one of Carmelites, quite recently founded; the other of Benedictines, governed just then by a near relative of her mother's. This latter monastery she frequently visited, and as might have been expected, the oftener she breathed its atmosphere of peace and prayer, the more she longed to make it the place of her rest for ever. Her inclination for the religious life gradually settled into a desire so strong and irrepressible, that even before she had reached her sixteenth year, with its renewed call to perfection, she had confided her wishes to her mother. While rejoicing at the intelligence, and giving the project every reasonable encouragement, that good mother suggested, that although the step was undeniably a holy and a happy one, it was very important too, consequently, that it would be better to delay it until time and reflection had more fully manifested its wisdom. Had the youthful Mary been at that time under regular spiritual direction, there can be no doubt that she would have been advised to follow her attraction for the cloister, but she knew nothing whatever about direction, imagining that spiritual communications even to a confessor were limited to the accusation of sins at confession. Being very timid, she did not venture to press the matter, so her mother, hearing nothing more of it, naturally concluded that her inclination for religion

had been the result of some passing fit of fervour, or perhaps only a childish fancy, forgotten as soon as formed, an idea apparently so much the more reasonable, as her natural gaiety of character seemed to dispose her rather for the world than for a convent. The seeming mistake was in reality a step to the development of the particular designs of God over His faithful servant, for although His general design is alike in all the saints, the especial destiny of each varies, and while the great outline of sanctity is universally the same, there are minute shades of difference in the characteristic virtues of individuals. The saints form the beautiful garden of the Church, redolent of every variety of sweetest fragrance, and enamelled with every shade of fairest tinting. The day was to come, when the Mother of the Incarnation would be bound to her Lord by the vows of religion, but before becoming a guide for His consecrated Spouses, she was to pass through married life and widowhood, that she might first furnish an example of perfection in both conditions, and thus serve as a model for woman in every state. Her ultimate destiny involved a species of apostolate among the savages of Canada, and for this, the novitiate awaiting her in the world would prove a more effectual preparation, than would the novitiate of the cloister. There she would have ample opportunities of practically learning the lesson of the cross, and at the same time of consolidating the virtues which were to be the distinguishing characteristics of her sanctity. Her zeal and charity would find a wider field, and her gentle patience reap a richer harvest, her union with God would be strengthened, while

tested, by exposure to the distracting cares of life, and her purity of soul would shine out with brighter lustre amidst hitherto unknown difficulties and dangers. And so, when in after years, the voice of the Spouse would bid her arise, and leave her home and country, and follow Him to the distant land which He would show her, she would be prepared to answer, "My heart, O Lord, is ready ; my heart is ready and my work is done !"

The first page of the history of her life, which we are about to close, has not been without its practical teaching. It is the page of the young ; happy those who study well the record ! They will discover, that "it is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth." (Lam. iii. 27). They will learn to admire the heavenly beauty of a pure soul, and fascinated by its unearthly charms, they will resolve to close their own hearts against sin, excluding even the smallest, as a security against the entrance of the greater. They will learn to appreciate the happiness of knowing and loving our Lord, like the blessed child who found her sweetest joy before the altar, and they will surely ask her to beg for them a share in her love of Jesus and her spirit of prayer, courageously checking the propensity for idle talking and still idler reading, which are so great an obstacle to recollection. Studying her love of retirement, they will pray for grace to resist worldly influences, and following her to the miserable homes of the destitute, they will aspire to become, like her, angels of comfort to the desolate and sorrowing. Thus will their childhood and youth be saintly, as were those of the model now presented to them.

CHAPTER II.

HER MARRIED LIFE, WITH ITS TRIALS AND VIRTUES.

MARIE GUYART was just entering on her seventeenth year, when her parents proposed to her a matrimonial alliance apparently calculated to insure her happiness. Such an engagement was utterly repugnant to her inclinations; it was inconsistent with the high hopes she had cherished of consecrating herself wholly to God in religion; its duties and solicitudes seemed a decided obstacle to the cultivation of that spirit of prayer and recollection which had become as her life-breath. Drawn daily more and more forcibly to an interior life in God, she shrank with her whole soul from a position which must necessarily immerse her in the distracting occupations and harassing cares of the world. But accustomed to look on her parents as the representatives of God, and therefore seeing only His will in the impending project, she submitted with the respectful docility habitual to her, and none but the interior witness of the sacrifice to obedience, could have suspected the cost at which it was offered. She simply assured her mother of her readiness to obey, adding the almost prophetic promise, that if God should bless her with a son, she would dedicate him to the Divine service, and that if He should ever restore her own liberty, she would consecrate it also to Him alone.

Her only object now became to prepare so fervently for the holy sacrament of marriage, that she might receive with it the abundant supply of grace needed for the due fulfilment of the difficult and responsible obligations soon to be hers.

Few indeed have ever brought to it more admirable dispositions than did that reluctant, yet in one sense, willing bride, therefore it followed, that although the absence of pomp and show may have divested the ceremonial of all charm for worldlings, the perfection of her interior preparation rendered it one of rare beauty in the eyes of heaven. She wore no costly attire, it is true, but in compensation, her soul was arrayed in that fairest of garments, her white baptismal robe, free still from spot or wrinkle, as on the day when it was first assumed. She displayed no sparkling gems, but many a virtue shone instead with a glorious light, before whose lustre that of flashing diamond and gilded coronet fades away, and as she thus stood before the altar in all the freshness of her innocence and the radiance of her spiritual beauty, must she not have won the smiles of angels? Must she not have attracted the complacency of the angels' Lord?

The duties of her new state came to her marked with the sign of the cross, nevertheless she set about them with an energy and devotedness which clearly manifested the singleness of her views, the purity of her motives, and the enlightened character of her piety. Knowing that perfection is in the accomplishment of God's will, and believing that as long as she faithfully complied with the duties of her condition in life, she should walk in the sure, straight path of obedience to that holy will, she took immediate measures for the discharge of its four-fold obligations to God, her husband, her servants and herself. The spirit of prayer conferred on her at the early visit of our Lord, had been ever since

developing itself more and more strongly, and her first precaution in arranging her rule of life, was that no worldly interests should ever be permitted to interfere with her spiritual exercises, whence alone she could derive strength to fulfil her daily duties and courage to bear her daily crosses. Yet she never allowed them to encroach on domestic arrangements, her well-regulated piety having taught her, that when these latter required the sacrifice of her love of prayer and solitude, she was doing God's will more perfectly in substituting active work for the enjoyment of immediate communion with Himself. Prolonged meditations, holy Mass, the sacraments and the word of God,—these were the four sources whence she drew the waters of grace to refresh and invigorate her soul. The holy Communion was above all, her joy and her life. As she herself tells us, it replenished her with sweetness, enlivened her faith, fortified her inclination for virtue, strengthened her confidence in God, intensified her love of her neighbour, and supported her under the weight of the cross. In one of her letters of after years, she remarks that a single communion well made, is sufficient to sanctify a soul, since it unites her to the Saint of Saints, adding, that the reason why it does not produce this result, is, that the soul after having given herself to our Lord, in return for His having given Himself to her, too soon revokes the offering in practice, nature shrinking from the total renunciation of self which the divine Sanctifier requires as a preliminary to His action. It was not so, her son remarks, with the holy Mother. Bringing to the heavenly Banquet a disengaged heart, an almost

annihilated will, and an entire abandonment to the Spirit of God, she not only co-operated with, but facilitated the operation of the sacramental grace, which meeting in her no obstacle to its freedom of action, bore her with marvellous rapidity along the path of solid virtue. Of such Communions it was, that she says, "The more frequently I received the sacraments, the more ardently I desired to receive them, because the more clearly I saw that they were to me the source of all spiritual blessings."

The love and reverence for God's word which she had manifested from earliest childhood, had but gained strength with years. To listen to it was still her delight, as it had been in her young days. She loved it for its own sake, irrespectively of the manner in which it might be announced, looking on every preacher as a herald of the great King, charged with the divine message of salvation. She says that her assiduity in attending sermons was rewarded by a great abundance of light and love, an increase of attraction and facility for prayer, and a renewal of fervour in the practice of the virtues of her state. With the enlarged experience of the spiritual life acquired at a later date, she recognised that He who never tries His creatures beyond their strength, had imparted to her in these benedictions of His sweetness, the particular graces needed to support her under the crosses with which it had been His will to surround her in the troubled days of her married life.

Her veneration for the preachers of God's word extended to all the ceremonies of Divine worship. Enchanted with their beauty and grandeur, and at

the same time supernaturally enlightened to understand their mysterious signification, she was filled with gratitude to her eternal Benefactor for the signal favour of having been born of Catholic parents, and thus made a child of the one true Church long before she could appreciate, or even comprehend the blessing. She was always eager to be among the first to enter the church, that securing a place where no part of the sublime ceremonial could escape her, she might be free to meditate on, and enter into the spirit of all.

The uprightness of her motives, and the holiness of her dispositions in entering the marriage state, ought, we naturally imagine, to have secured her at least the average amount of its happiness. But for the purification of her soul and the perfecting of her virtue, God permitted that her garland of bridal flowers should soon be turned into a wreath of thorns, and thorns all the sharper, that they were pointed by the hand to which she might have expected to look as her shield against trouble. It is difficult to explain this singular phase of her diversified career. Her husband is represented as eminently endowed with the richest gifts of mind and person; he fully appreciated the value of the treasure which he possessed in her, and did ample justice to her admirable qualities, impressed most of all, perhaps, by the calm patience which no annoyance could ruffle; the steady love which no trial could shake; the Christian heroism which gathered new courage from each new shock;—yet it is nevertheless quite certain that the bitter sufferings of her married life originated, though unintentionally,

with him. They rendered her duty in his regard all the more arduous, yet it was not on that account the less perfectly fulfilled. In uniting her destiny with his, she believed that she was carrying out an arrangement of the admirable providence of God; hence from the first moment of their union, she looked on him as holding to her the place of God. In thus adopting the supernatural principles of faith as the guide of all her relations towards him, she cut off the thousand sources of trouble and temptation which are sure to arise whenever nature, and not grace, holds rule,—so it happened, that among the sorrows of her wedded life, domestic disunion, at least, never found a place, and it followed too, that her spiritualized affection stood tests, which purely human love would not have borne. She was never known to fail in the respect or obedience due to her husband; her constant study was to promote his comfort; her unceasing aim not only to defer to, but even to anticipate his slightest wishes, and all was done with the winning sweetness and rare prudence which were among her characteristics.

Nature had indeed dealt bountifully with her, and grace developing, refining and spiritualizing the gifts of nature, had produced one of those dispositions, which, to include all praise in a single word, are sometimes termed angelic. Her temper was sweet and gentle, but it was a gentleness as much removed from languid apathy and insensibility, as from impulsive quickness and impetuosity. It was the serenity of a soul which, possessing God, is happy in Him, and has no desire beyond Him, and it excluded neither firmness in decision, nor courage and

resolution in difficulty, nor promptitude and energy in action. Her nature was so placid and docile, that we never hear, even in her childhood, of the least of those ebullitions of anger or manifestations of self-will, usual in ordinary children. It was so enduring and forgiving, that while inoffensive herself, she was incapable of taking offence, and absolutely inaccessible to resentment. It was so kind and tender, that sympathy for the troubles of others, especially the poor, was among the very first of the features which her childish disposition revealed, and which, like all her great qualities, strengthened with time. There was nothing rigid in her piety, repulsive in her manner, austere in her ideas, or contracted in her mind. She served the Lord with joy, and so, her interior peace was reflected in an external cheerfulness, tempered ever by a sweet, modest gravity that imparted dignity to her demeanour and commanded universal respect. Her heart's history might be epitomized in one word,—self-sacrifice,—and truly it was the quality of which she had most need. Her charity has drawn an impenetrable veil over the precise nature, as well as the painful details of the trials which lasted all through her short union with Mr. Martin. Alluding to them in later life, in one of her confidential letters to her son, she says, "The only comfort of my married life was that I was able to consecrate you to God before your birth, and that your father, who possessed a good heart, and had the fear of God, not only sanctioned, but even approved of my devotions. Regarding certain occurrences with which you are acquainted, and which are to be imputed to inadvertence, he regretted

them most heartily, and often asked my pardon for them with tears,"—tears, she might have added, not only of self-reproach, but of admiration for the meek endurance of the gentle sufferer.

To the perfect fulfilment of her duty to her husband, she added the exact discharge of her obligations to her household. Mr. Martin was at the head of a silk manufactory which gave employment to a number of workmen, and these at once became the objects of the zeal and charity of their good mistress. Her first aim was to secure influence over them, that she might gain their hearts, and then bring their hearts so won, to God. For this end, she attended to their wants as carefully as if they had been her own children, devoting her chief solicitude to the concerns of the soul. Dreading beyond all evils, an offence against the God whom she loved supremely, she induced them to go regularly to confession, that its protecting grace might be their preservative from sin. To animate them to virtue, she gave them occasional exhortations, repeating the instructions which she had heard in sermons, and adding her own reflections; but prudent in her zeal, she took care not to intrude her lessons at unseasonable times, generally selecting for them the hours of meals, and by this means at once feeding the souls of her hearers with the word of God, and cutting off frivolous, or perhaps sinful topics.

A living model of the virtues which she inculcated, she encouraged her dependents even more by example than by precept, to love and serve God faithfully. Always calm and self-possessed, affable

and kind, she practically illustrated the beauty of peace and union. Patient and self-controlled, she taught the heroism of Christian endurance. As solicitous for the interests and as intent on the happiness of others, as if her own heart had not been wrung with anguish, and oppressed with care, she exemplified the unselfishness of true charity. Enlightened and judicious in her views, orderly and systematic in her arrangements, active and energetic in the practical details of business, she taught by her conduct, more forcibly than by any words, that "piety is good for all things." It need not be added that she won the love of her domestics, who looking on her more as a gentle mother than as a mistress, sympathized in her sorrows as if they had been personal, and manifested on all occasions their compassion for her afflictions, their admiration of her fortitude, and their reverence for her person. Knowing that well-ordered charity begins at home, she took care never to devote herself so entirely to the salvation of others, as to neglect her own soul. In order to secure time for the requirements of both, she avoided unnecessary visits and idle amusements, and having fully complied with her domestic duties, she retired to her oratory, there to find in prayer and spiritual reading repose from past fatigues, and courage for new labours.

Thus passed her first probation in the world. The death of her husband brought it to a close at the end of only two years, but they were years so rich in every virtue of her condition, that the married woman who would lead a sanctified and useful life, is sure of attaining the holy end by following her

example. She was indeed the model of a faultless wife; so assiduous in prayer, that it would seem as if she considered prayer her only obligation; so devoted at the same time to the interests of all connected with her, that it would appear as if her domestic responsibilities were her absorbing concern, and through all, so utterly forgetful of self, that chance observers could never have suspected how those cheerfully discharged duties involved the living sacrifice of her bleeding heart.

In this second page of the life of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, we read a continuance of the work of grace in her soul. We meet the same virtues with which the opening page has made us familiar, but now expanded on a wider sphere, and strengthened by severer conflicts, and still, at every step, we note for our own instruction the action of the Spirit of God, and her docile correspondence, the two necessary and inseparable agents in the sanctification of man. In the biography which he has left us of his saintly mother, her son particularly directs attention to the solidity of the foundation which she prepared for the edifice of her future holiness. Guided by the Divine Director, who since early childhood had undertaken the formation of her soul, she adopted as the four fundamental principles of her spiritual life, fidelity to the duty of prayer, careful avoidance of every deliberate sin, the frequent reception of the holy sacraments, and punctual attendance at divine service, as well as at sermons, and all public observances and ceremonies of the Church. By thus steadyng the foundation, she ensured the perma-

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istent stability of the building, and by similar means only will any one else secure the same end. Prayer and the sacraments purify the soul ; purity of soul prepares for union with God ; union with the Church at once forms and cements the bonds of union with God. Sanctity, as so often observed, is primarily the work of grace, but grace will come to us only through the appointed channels. If we cut off the channel, we cut off also the supply, deprived of which, far from advancing in the ways of God, we shall but languish and lose ground. " Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Ps. cxxvi. 1).

CHAPTER III.

WIDOWHOOD.—LIFE OF SOLITUDE AND PRAYER.

THE young wife was but nineteen when a new scene in life's great drama was opened before her by the death of her husband. Although, through God's permission, he had caused her very bitter sorrows, her naturally warm heart was not the less grieved at the separation. She had fully appreciated his good qualities ; had found excuses in her charity for his shortcomings, and had loved him with sincere affection, but as she had seen and accepted an arrangement of the divine will in the formation of the marriage tie, so did she recognise and adore a dispensation of the same Almighty will in the breaking of the bond, and this one consideration sufficed to reconcile her to the trial, and to give rest to her soul. At the period of her widowhood, her

prospects were no doubt cheerless enough. Her pecuniary affairs had been left in a state of great embarrassment; she had an infant of six months old to provide for, and as she remarks, her comparative youth and inexperience seemed to unfit her for a struggle with the difficulties of her position, but here, as ever, her beautiful trust in God supported her, and with a firm, filial reliance on His promise to be with those who are in tribulation, she took up her new crosses with resignation and abandonment so perfect, that neither loss of fortune, nor anticipation of absolute poverty, nor anxiety for the fate of her little child could disturb her serenity or shake her confidence.

The virtue and amiability which she had evinced during her first matrimonial engagement, soon procured her new and far more advantageous offers, while the capacity and integrity which had marked her business transactions, led to very promising proposals for re-embarking in commerce. Prudence seemed in favour of acceptance; natural inclination was opposed to it. In weighing the question, however, it was not to natural inclination that she appealed for a decision; this never had been her guide, nor should it now. If it were, the remembrance of the miseries of her married life would have been quite sufficient reason to deter her from risking a repetition of them, but faith had taught her to see in those past crosses, only valuable opportunities of practising virtue and acquiring merit, therefore she gave the apprehension of their renewal no place in her deliberations. The interior attraction which sweetly but irresistibly urged her to devote herself

all to God,—this it was which determined her to embrace a life of entire seclusion in the world, as soon as her affairs should be arranged. In forming her plans, she can scarcely have refrained from casting a wistful glance at the attractive solitude of the cloister, but knowing that its entrance was for the present closed to her by her duty to her child, she resigned herself to wait for the promised land, until she should first have crossed the intervening desert. Referring to this period in one of her after letters to her son, she speaks of the transports of her gratitude at finding herself free to follow her call to solitude, where without distraction or division she could think of and love her Lord, while she watched over the babe whom He had committed to her keeping. The death of her mother-in-law, in about a month after that of her husband, removed the last obstacle to the accomplishment of her project.

Connected with the early months of her widowhood, is a wondrous supernatural favour, granted her as if to confirm her late determination, and mark it with a sensible sign of heaven's approval. We shall record it in the words best suited to so sublime a subject,—her own. "On the eve," she says, "of the feast of the Incarnation, 1620, I was on my way to business, which I recommended to God by my ordinary aspiration, 'In thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me never be confounded!—when suddenly, my progress was unaccountably arrested, and while I stood motionless in body, the action of my mind was equally suspended, all recollection of the affairs I was engaged in vanishing instantaneously from my memory. Then the eyes of my soul were wondrously

opened in one moment, and all the sins, faults and imperfections of my life revealed to me in general and in particular, with indescribable distinctness. At the same time, I saw myself plunged in a bath of blood, and I knew that it was the blood of the Son of God which had been shed for the very sins now so clearly represented to me. If the Almighty in His great goodness had not sustained me, I think I should have died of terror, so horrible did even the smallest sin appear. Oh! what words can express the emotion of the soul at seeing the Lord of infinite goodness and incomprehensible sanctity insulted by a worm of the earth, and a Man-God shedding His most adorable blood to reconcile sinners to His Father! Above all, who can describe her feelings at finding herself personally stained with sin, and recognising that the Incarnate God would have done for the expiation of her individual guilt, what He has done for the atonement of the transgressions of all men in general! At that moment, my heart seemed wholly changed into love for Him who had shown me this signal mercy, and it was filled at the same time with indescribable, and even unimaginable sorrow for having offended Him. This feeling of loving sorrow was so overpowering, that I would willingly have thrown myself into flames, if thus I could have appeased it, and strangest of all, its force was full of gentleness. It sweetly bound my soul by its very charms, and led her on a willing captive. A strong interior impulse urged me to confess my sins, and on returning to my usual condition, I found myself standing opposite the little church of the Feuillants who had lately established themselves at

Tours. I entered, and seeing one of the Fathers standing in the middle of the chapel as if he had been expecting my arrival, I on the spot confessed the sins which had just been discovered to me, too intent on making reparation to Him whom I had offended, to notice that I might easily have been overheard by a lady who had entered the church in the meantime. When I had finished, the Father gently told me to return the next day to his confessional, and I left without observing at the moment that I had not received absolution. This omission was supplied at my renewed confession next morning. During the first year that I remained under the direction of this Father, I confined myself entirely to the accusation of my sins, thinking that nothing else should be introduced at confession, but having heard a pious girl say that it was not right to practise corporal austerities without permission from the confessor, I applied for it to mine, and he then regulated the amount of these, as well as the number of my confessions and communions. I returned home, changed into another creature, and that so completely, that I no longer recognised myself. I discovered with unmistakable clearness the ignorance under cover of which I had hitherto thought myself very innocent, my conduct very harmless, and my whole spiritual condition blameless. After our Lord had opened my eyes, I saw myself as I was, and I had to own that my justice was but iniquity."

She always looked on this heavenly favour as one of the greatest she had ever received, and its date as synonymous with that of her perfect conversion to

God. "It would be difficult," says her son, "to lead a more exemplary life than hers had been; by the word conversion, we are not then to understand, a transition from a state of sin to a state of grace, but a resolute determination to bid adieu wholly to the world, that she might give herself all to God and live only by His love." To mark her entire separation from the world, she assumed a peculiarly grave style of dress, dismissed her servants, gave up her house, and returned to her father's, where free from all care and responsibility, she found herself as she desired, alone with God alone. She chose an apartment in the upper story as the most retired, and between this and the adjoining oratory, she passed most of her time in prayer. She was never to be seen except at church or at home; paid no visits and received very few; spoke but rarely, and then concisely. She took her frugal meals at her father's table, then retired to her solitude, as she says herself, "like the dove to its nest." It was at this time, that in addition to her other most severe austerities, she gave up the use of linen, substituting serge. Knowing the danger of inaction, she occupied the intervals between prayer in embroidery, choosing this employment because it left the mind free to converse with her Lord. But although her life was thus hidden in God, it was no part of her piety to forget the interests of her neighbour. In her present straitened circumstances, she could no longer open her hand in alms as had been her wont in better days, but the sick poor retained their old place in her heart, and among these she still could always find ample exercise for her charity. Accord-

ingly, she sought out the most revolting cases of disease, and made appointments with the sufferers to meet her at her home, where kneeling before them while they sat, she washed and dressed their loathsome sores, contriving to stoop closely over their ulcerated limbs, so that nature might be crucified in every sense, and crushed in every feeling. And as the soul's interests are more precious far than those of the miserable body, so was it her chief concern to instruct the ignorant, to encourage the weak, to rouse the sinful to repentance, and animate the good to higher virtue. Thus passed the first year of her widowhood: at its close, the tenor of her life was altered, that in a new sphere, she might have the opportunity of practising new virtues.

CHAPTER IV.

PURITY OF SOUL.—LIFE OF HUMILIATION IN HER SISTER'S HOUSE.

IT would seem as if the holy widow had now attained the very position for which her heart had so long sighed, a life of close and constant communion with God, and, at the same time, of active charity to her neighbour,—a life combining every facility for her own sanctification, with abundant opportunities of promoting the salvation of other souls also. But scarcely had she realized its advantages and tasted its sweetness, when at the end of one short year, she was called on to relinquish it, by a married sister, who, knowing her talent for business, begged her assistance in the management of a large commercial

establishment of her own. The proposal was naturally most distasteful, but seeing in it a road to the suffering and humiliation for which her soul thirsted, as well as an opportunity of practising her favourite charity, she made the sacrifice in her spirit of habitual self-immolation, only stipulating for freedom in her spiritual exercises, and permission to return home every evening. Our Lord was pleased to mark His approval of her decision, and to reward her generosity, by raising her to a higher degree of prayer.

This partial return to the world suggested the idea that she might now perhaps be induced to accede to the unanimous wish of her friends, and engage once more in married life. The subject was therefore before long renewed, and one day she was so hard pressed with a variety of arguments connected with the interests of her son, that she paused a little to consider whether the opinions of so many wise and disinterested advisers ought not to weigh somewhat against her own lights. The hesitation was only momentary, and yet on reflection, it seemed to her to have involved so serious an infidelity, that in subsequent general confessions of the greatest sins of her life, she ranked this first, as the one most deserving of her regret, and the possible cause of her severe interior sufferings. She knew that in its own nature, the fault in question was inconsiderable, but she understood equally well that its attendant circumstances gave it a certain degree of gravity for her, whom the Almighty had so favoured. Short as her hesitation had been, it appeared like disloyalty to Him whom she had promised to take for her only

Spouse should the bonds of her earthly union be ever broken, and that with her capability of appreciating the sublimity of a vocation to a life with God alone, she should have deliberated for an instant between His invitation and that of the world, seemed to her a fitting subject of life-long sorrow and self-condemnation. The infidelity to grace was aggravated in her estimation by its accompanying ingratitude, and this in itself was a reproach keenly painful to a heart so tender and loving as hers.

Here again, we are struck with wonder and admiration at her purity of conscience, and here again we breathe a prayer for light to see ourselves as God sees us; for grace to understand the malice of sin as the saints understand it. It is because their hearts are so pure, that the spiritual vision of the saints is so refined. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they see God," and in the light of that eternal Sun of Justice, they discern minutest stains, invisible to souls obscured by the clouds of sin, or dimmed by the mists of self-love. Again, it is because the hearts of the saints are so pure, that their love of God is so sensitive. "Blessed are the clean of heart," for they see the Divine attractions as clearly as is given to man in his mortality, and seeing them thus clearly, every slight infidelity to a God so beautiful and so good, assumes importance in their eyes, and excites a corresponding sorrow. The young widow's momentary irresolution left her only the more firmly determined to renounce the world at once and for ever, and in order to render that resolution irrevocable, she bound herself to God by a vow of perpetual chastity, being then twenty-one years of age. About

this time she was placed under the spiritual care of the Reverend Father Dom Raymond of St. Bernard, and to this enlightened master she was first indebted for the great blessing of regular direction in the paths of the interior life.

Her position in her sister's house was unaccountably strange. She had been invited there, because her clear intellect, sound judgment, and natural aptitude for business promised to render her an invaluable assistant in the management of a large concern, and yet, instead of being at once placed in her own sphere at the head of the family, she was permitted without question or remonstrance to establish her quarters in the kitchen, as if considered suited only for menial work ;—treated meantime in the most imperious manner, not only by the master and mistress of the house, but by the very servants ; looked down on by all, as if she had been not even a stranger or a hireling, but an outcast. The Spirit of God inspired her, she says, to conceal her natural abilities, that she might pass for an ignorant woman, fit only to wait on the servants, and this lowly condition had such powerful charms for her humble heart, that she actually feared excess in her attachment to it. In proposing this apprehension as a conscientious doubt to her director, her great fear was that he would oblige her to emerge from her abject position, and assume her rightful place in the family.

Her insatiable desire of crosses and humiliations was not satisfied even with the ingratitude of her brother and sister, nor with the insolent behaviour of the domestics ; she sought for new sufferings, and

among others, contrived to burn herself while employed in cooking. She attended the servants in sickness, reserving the whole care of them to herself, and voluntarily rendering them the lowest services. Among other instances of the kind, she at one time dressed the infected wound of a workman whose foot had been nearly severed in two by a terrible accident, and whose deplorable condition rendered him absolutely unapproachable to all but herself. Although gangrene threatened, and amputation seemed inevitable, she persevered in her work of mercy and self-denial, until she had effected a cure. Her brother and sister, she looked on as her best benefactors, accepting their unkindness as the greatest of favours, and obeying their directions with scrupulous exactitude, and this life she led, and this death to self she practised, not for a week, or a month, but for three or four successive years. Oh ! how richly traced in heaven's own colouring, must have been the daily record of those years kept by her faithful guardian spirit ! How mighty the change wrought in her spiritual condition, as one after another they passed away, each leaving behind an accumulation of grace made fruitful ; each marked by new, and always more wondrous supernatural favours ! It is not, however, by her supernatural favours that we are to estimate her sanctity, but by her practice of solid virtue, nor are we to forget that if by an exceptional vocation, she was led into the higher paths of the mystic life, she walked long, steadily and to the end in the common road, to which, as Christians, we are called no less than she was. Nevertheless, that singular favours should

have been granted her, is exactly what we should have been led to expect from our acquaintance with the history of the saints, which has taught us that it is ever God's way to be liberal with His creatures, in proportion as they are liberal with him. There had been no rapine in the holocaust of this, His faithful servant. She had never refused Him one gift He craved; withheld one sacrifice He asked; was He to be outdone in generosity? Oh, far from it! In presence of the magnificence of His gifts to her chosen soul, we have but to bow down as we bend before the sun when its ray dazzles us. The reverential wonder which they inspire, is, after all but a homage to the great Giver, and if while we admire and venerate her exceptional privileges, we at the same time study and try to copy the imitable portions of her example, we shall reap profit from both passages of her life.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATION FOR A HIGHER DEGREE OF DIVINE UNION.—ACTIVE LIFE.—INTERIOR TRIALS.

WE cannot have studied the lives of the saints without observing, that while infinitely generous of His graces to all His faithful servants, their almighty Lord from time to time chooses certain individuals among them as recipients of a more than ordinary measure of His liberality. We read of a privileged few, to whom He is lavish of what may be termed exceptional marks of His love. These chosen souls, He inundates with celestial gifts,—revealing

to them the secrets of heaven, granting them glimpses of His glory and beauty, transforming them into Himself, so as in a manner to divinize them, and even sometimes imparting visible external marks of their sublime spiritual exaltation. It would seem as if He desired to manifest to men in their persons, the immensity of His goodness, the infinitude of His condescension, and the magnificence of His riches. They are the specially favoured among the favoured: they form a class apart, in which God, wonderful in all His saints, is wonderful surpassingly.

In that exceptional class, suited as it would seem to us rather for angels than for mortals, a place was destined in the divine designs for the subject of our history, Marie Guyart, but before those all-gracious designs could be realized, certain preliminaries were needed. To the thoroughly purified soul alone it belongs to fly without impediment to God, as the needle flies to the magnet, and admirable, nay wonderful as was the interior purity to which this singularly favoured being had attained, it had yet to undergo further processes of refinement before she should be disposed for the privilege awaiting her. Our Lord continued therefore to draw her more and more forcibly to the perfection of the virtue, revealing to her in the meantime, that when it had reached the required degree, a great, but as yet unspecified grace would be her reward. To stimulate her zeal, He gave her a vision of a soul free from even the slightest shadow of defect, and the sight was one so entrancing, so enrapturing, that she said, if men could only see it, they would willingly renounce all things for the bare enjoyment of the

glorious spectacle. Charmed with the celestial beauty of such a soul, and thirsting ever more to share its happy privilege of flying to God without hindrance or delay, she was carefully on her guard against the most trivial imperfection, and when betrayed into one, never desisted, until by sighs and prayers she had obtained forgiveness, which she knew by the cessation of reproach of conscience.

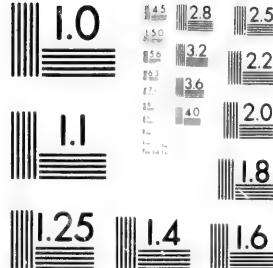
The sanctity of God was represented to her under the semblance of a vast sea, with whose limpid waters no defilement however small was allowed to mingle, all such being instantaneously rejected. Overwhelmed at sight of the disproportion between the purity of the human soul, and the holiness of the great God with whom she aspires to be united, she could only exclaim again and again, in the depths of her self-annihilation, "O Purity! O Purity! Hide, absorb me in Thee, O mighty Ocean of Purity!" At another time, the same Divine attribute was shown her as a spotless mirror, reflected on which, the least of her infidelities seemed magnified into a mountain. The profound impression of the Sanctity of God thus imparted, so greatly increased her delicacy of conscience, that she reproached herself for her smallest failure, as if it had been a fault of magnitude. She says that her union with God was never interrupted by necessary conversation, even though it might have lasted the whole day, but that if she spoke a useless word, or yielded to a distracting thought, she at once found the interior bond weakened, and received a reproach from conscience. Once, after she had committed an imperfection, an interior voice whispered to her, "If an artist had painted a

fine picture, would he be well pleased to see it soiled and stained?" Another time, the same interior monitor asked, "If you had a costly pearl or diamond, would you like to have it thrown into the mud?" The words seemed to give her a new insight into the sanctity of God, and they filled her with unutterable confusion. So profoundly did the love of interior purity strike root in her innocent soul, that she accepted, and even desired the most rigorous punishment for the slightest fault, never admitting the idea that there could be a disproportion.

Her view of the divine presence had now become so habitual, that by a marvellous privilege, it was never interrupted. If duty obliged her to speak with her neighbour, her communication with God was not in consequence suspended. If she wrote, her mind was equally intent on her subject and on her Lord, and as often as she paused to renew the ink in her pen, her heart profited of the momentary interruption, to say a loving word to Him. If the whole world had been present, she says, nothing in it could have distracted her soul. She had received an infused knowledge of the nature of the works of God, their relations with their Maker, and the end of their creation; all therefore served to unite her to, instead of distracting her attention from Him.

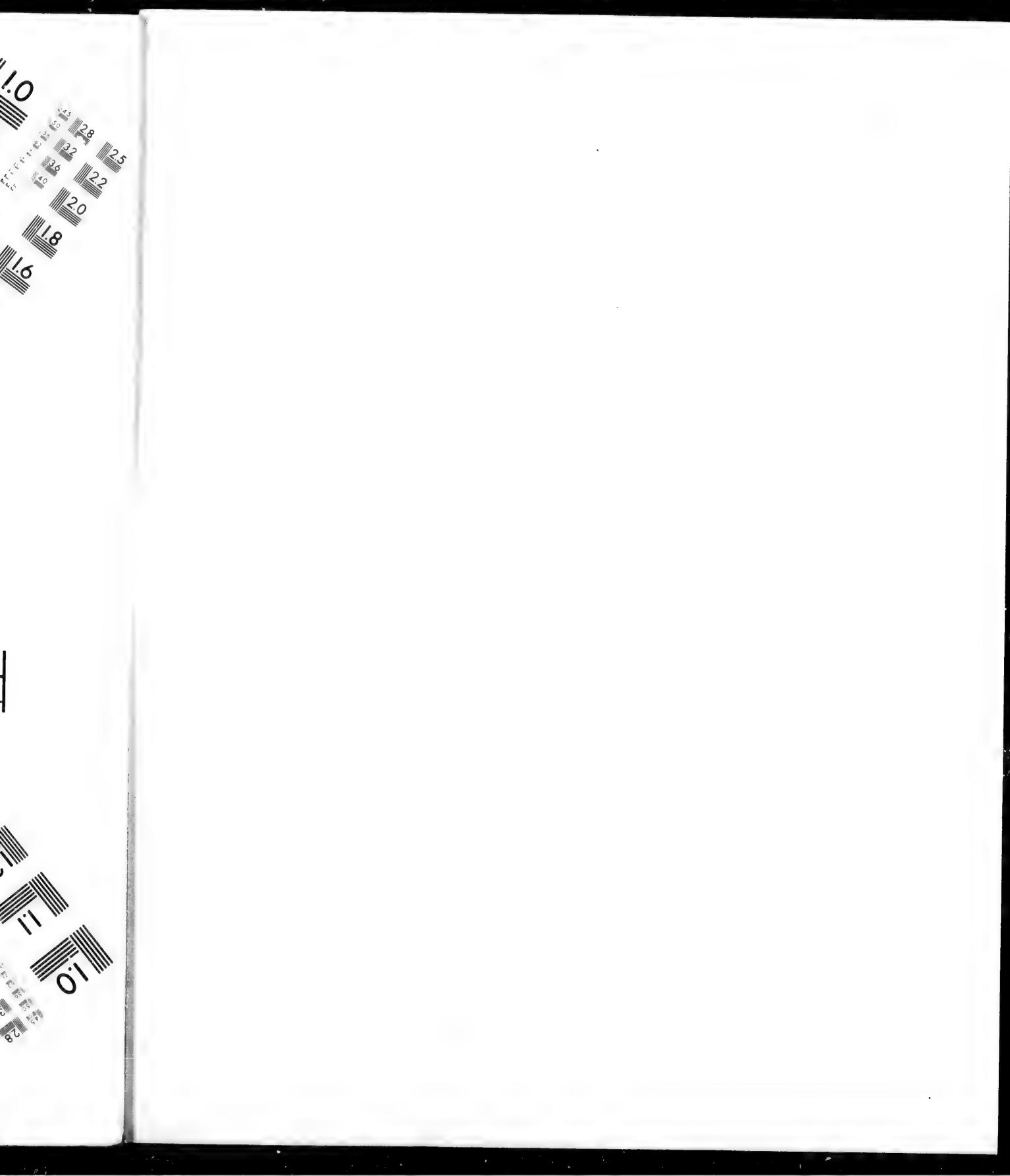
To make reparation to the outraged sanctity of God, and to honour the Passion of her Lord, as well as with the specific intention of disposing her soul for the yet unrevealed favour awaiting her, she redoubled the austerities already so rigorous. She allowed herself only as much sleep as was necessary

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for existence, taking that on the ground, with no covering but a hair-cloth. After a while, the bare floor appeared too luxurious a couch, so she spread a hair-cloth over it, and on that she stretched her weary limbs for a short part of the night. This mortification she looked on as the severest she had ever endured, the weight of the body and the hardness of the boards combining to press the sharp surface into the flesh, so that constant pain permitted only short and broken sleep. A considerable portion of the night was divided between prayer and corporal mortifications. She was familiar with instruments of penance of every kind, and used them with an unsparing hand. Ingenious in devising means of crucifying her senses, she mixed wormwood with her food, and between meals, kept the bitter herb a long time in her mouth, until forbidden through regard for her health, to continue so mortifying a practice. She succeeded however in so completely destroying the sense of taste, as to be finally unable to distinguish one description of food from another. Many years after she went to Canada, this fact was decidedly ascertained by an unmistakable test. Yet she says she was never ill, but on the contrary, always vigorous, always cheerful, always ready for new mortifications, and so impressed with their value, that she would have counted the day lost, on which she had suffered nothing. In daily Communion, she renewed the strength so severely taxed by her appalling austerities and her fatiguing labours for her neighbour.

That humiliation of mind might keep pace with subjection of the flesh, she one day brought her

director a written confession of the sins and imperfections of her whole life with her name affixed, beseeching him after he had read, to attach it to the church door, that all might know the extent of her infidelity to God. Repeated rebuffs from her confessor served only to manifest the sincerity of her humility; she received them with her habitual love of contempt, and although the paper was burned, instead of being exhibited as she desired, her fidelity to inspiration was rewarded by a new flood of graces. Among the rest, she learned by revelation the exact nature of the celestial favour previously promised only in general terms, our Lord condescending to intimate to her explicitly, that she was destined for that highest degree of divine union, accorded, as we have just seen, only to a privileged few even of the saints. Although the wondrous promise was not to be realized for the present, the prospect of its accomplishment at a future day, filled her with holy joy, nerving her at the same time to new efforts for the removal of every obstacle to the consummation of her hopes.

After she had spent three or four years in the house of her brother-in-law in the manner already noticed, Divine Providence permitted that he should open his eyes to her capabilities and his own injustice. By a tardy concession to her merits, he asked her at last, to undertake the management of his affairs, foreseeing that they could not but prosper in her hands. Besides holding the rank of an artillery officer, he was charged with the commissariat of the whole kingdom, and under favour of these two appointments, he embarked in a variety of enter-

prises which obliged him to maintain a very large establishment, including numerous servants and vehicles. His charitable sister, in undertaking her new duties, still retained the old, from which her heart refused to part, because of their attendant humiliations. She got through all, and satisfied everybody; meantime so perfectly maintaining her union with God, that she seemed like one of those celestial Spirits of whom our Lord declared that "they ever behold the face of the Father in heaven." She tells us that she spent the greater part of the day in a stable which served as a store, and that sometimes she was still on the quay at midnight, sending off, or receiving goods; that her ordinary companions were carters, porters and other workmen; that she had to look after fifty or sixty horses; that during the frequent absences of her brother and sister, she had their personal affairs to attend to in addition to the rest, and still, that as this multiplicity of occupations had been undertaken only from a motive of charity, God permitted that instead of proving an obstacle to the spirit of recollection, it tended on the contrary to nourish and strengthen it. She says that when she found herself so overwhelmed with business as scarcely to know where to begin, she besought our Lord's help, reminding Him that without it, all must remain undone, and the appeal was never made in vain. Looking back in later life to this period, she remarks that the trials and hardships which she had to encounter during her residence with her brother-in-law, were especially arranged by Divine Providence as a most suitable preparation for her future work in Canada.

Sighing for the consummation of the divine union promised her, and ever seeking for some new gem with which to adorn her soul, she resolved to bind herself by vow to the evangelical counsels, adopting as an obligation, what had hitherto been only a voluntary practice, and thus in a manner anticipating the time when she should realize the dearest wish of her heart, by consecrating herself to God in religion. Her vow of obedience regarded her director, her sister, and her brother-in-law, and in its connection with the two last, was attended with difficulties known only to God. As to poverty, she possessed nothing but what was given her by her sister, contenting herself with bare necessities. The interests of her son, she abandoned to divine Providence, aspiring with her whole heart to that perfect poverty of spirit which desires but God, and is content with Him alone. In recompense of this new proof of love, her generous Master granted her the precious gift of His own divine peace, and to enhance the treasure, He brought it to her Himself, as on another memorable occasion, He had brought it to His apostles. It was not that her soul had hitherto been a stranger to God's peace; on the contrary, in writing many years later of the favour now conferred, she says she had not supposed it possible to enjoy here below a more perfect interior peace than she habitually possessed, but that after our Lord had whispered to her heart, "Peace be to this house,"—so profound, so imperturbable, so transcendent a peace was imparted, that she never for a moment lost it, although her multiplied afflictions might well have shaken it, had it not been

steadily anchored on loving conformity to the will of Him who had established His empire in her soul.

The gold of her virtue had been well tried in the crucible of tribulation, but as yet, it had not been subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation ; through this, for its more entire refinement it was now to pass. All at once her ordinary enjoyment of her spiritual exercises was succeeded by utter disinclination. The sweetness and patience which had scarcely cost her an effort in her intercourse with her neighbour, gave place to a sensitiveness and irritability which would have caused her many faults if she had not been closely and constantly on her guard. Her childlike submission to her director appeared an intolerable yoke ; her dependence on her sister a positive degradation. The humiliations so freely embraced, and so long and dearly prized, seemed in her altered views, inconsistent with self-respect. The corporal penances hitherto lightened and sweetened by the unction of Divine love, now assumed their worst sharpness, and excited her strongest repugnance. Importunate scruples were added to temptation, and while thus violently assailed on many sides, she seemed not to receive light or comfort from any. Her only support in these terrible interior trials was in the remembrance of God's promise "to be with those who are in tribulation" (Ps. xc. 15), and truly He was with her in hers, and by His almighty grace brought her so triumphantly through them, that amidst her complicated sufferings, she never failed in her fidelity to her Lord ; never omitted the smallest duty or fell into the slightest impatience. He who does not permit His creatures

to be tried beyond their strength, granted her relief when she least expected it. In the restored light, she clearly saw that the object of the tempter had been to lure her from the path of perfection to which God had called her, and on which, as we have seen, she had already made gigantic strides ; and she discovered with equal distinctness that the ordeal through which she had passed was a necessary preparation for the higher graces to come. By her example on this occasion, as well as by her subsequent instructions, she teaches that however strong may be the pressure of temptation, however impenetrable the darkness of aridity, the afflicted soul should not omit any of her accustomed exercises, whether of obligation or of mere devotion, or lose her trust in that divine grace which never deserts her in her conflicts, but powerfully, though perhaps imperceptibly supports her in every difficulty.

CHAPTER VI.

SUPERNATURAL FAVOURS.—VISION OF THE MOST
ADORABLE TRINITY.—RENEWED INTERIOR TRIALS.
—NEW HEAVENLY FAVOURS.

As the released torrent rushes on with increased impetuosity after a temporary restraint, so did the emancipated soul of the holy Mother bound to God with ten-fold ardour, now that the pressure of temptation and the darkness of doubt had been removed. As a reward for her fidelity in her late trials, our Blessed Lord one day showed her His Heart and her own so entirely united, so completely

fused, that they seemed to form but one. After this grace, her love of God appeared to change its character, and to become altogether divine. Her heart was no longer her own, for it had been made the possession of the Heart of Jesus. Absorbed in transports and ecstasies of holy love, she grieved that even the short time which she allowed to sleep, should interrupt the recollection of the only Desired of her soul. She aspired with ever increasing ardour to the mystic union so long promised and so long delayed. It was to be, as it were, the culminating point of the Divine favours ;—meantime she was permitted, if not to reach the summit, at least to ascend to mysterious heights on the holy mountain, and there behold wonders not destined for sight of mortal eyes ;—wonders which she herself confesses to be inexplicable by human words. Miraculously strengthened to bear the overwhelming flood of splendour, her soul was elevated even to the vision of the most august and adorable Trinity. She saw the relations between the Three Divine Persons ; their unity, their distinction, their operations within and outside themselves. She saw their operations also in the nine choirs of angels, and understood how the human soul is created to the image of God. It took but a moment, she says, to receive the impression of all these wonders, whereas the effort to describe them requires time, for human language cannot express in a word, what the mind can grasp in an instant. The ecstasy lasted five hours, at the end of which she found herself still kneeling exactly in the spot of the church where it had commenced. She describes herself during that time as absolutely

lost in those unfathomable splendours ; capable only of passively receiving the impression of the purely intellectual vision unfolded to her with indescribable clearness and singleness of view. Writing of this great favour towards the end of life, she says that it was then as vividly present to her in all its circumstances as at the time of its occurrence, adding in her own simple way, that "great things like this are never forgotten." It has been observed that the terms in which she speaks of the most abstruse mysteries of faith, are too clear, too precise, too strictly in accordance with the teaching of theology, to have come within the natural lights of a woman of ordinary education ; therefore while the style of the narrative has excited the admiration of the learned, it has left them without a doubt as to the Divine source of her inspiration. For a long time after the vision, her soul was so completely concentrated in the most adorable Trinity, that she had no power to detach her thoughts from the ineffable mystery.

We might anticipate that the wonderful favour just recorded, would be the last prelude to the elevation of God's chosen servant to the promised high degree of Divine union, but such is the incomprehensible purity of the all-holy God, that even after so many delays, so many trials, so much fidelity, so much love and devotedness, He did not yet find her sufficiently free from the dust of the earth, sufficiently disengaged from every creature, sufficiently detached even from His own sensible gifts, to be worthy of that mysterious union which requires the purity of an angel. The work of preparation was accordingly to go on ; the arduous work of self-anni-

hilation, of interior crucifixion, of total sacrifice of every feeling, and absolute death to every inclination. Our Lord showed her her soul as it would appear when adorned with the required degree of holiness, and she confessed that He did her but justice in still deferring the hour for which she sighed.

It is the remark of her son in the Life of his holy Mother, that temptation is among the most efficacious means employed by the Almighty for the purification of His creatures, for as in that state, the soul is pursued by a vivid and constant apprehension of committing sin, she lives in an habitual hatred of, and watchfulness against it, which are but too apt to relax when the presence of evil is less apparent, and the necessity for combating it less urgent. Through this grievous suffering, the servant of God had once more to pass. It appeared to her, she said as if she had suddenly fallen from paradise into purgatory. She found herself not only deprived of all consolation, but filled with alarm at the remembrance of past favours, which seemed to her to have been unreal and delusive. The thought of God was, as usual, ever present to her mind, but it brought no comfort, for with it came an afflicting doubt of the sincerity of her love for Him. Far down in the depths of her soul, it is true, reposed the solid peace founded on submission to His will, but it was a matter of difficulty to realize the existence of that submission. Nature had once more asserted its sensitiveness to humiliation and contradiction. In short, so profound was her anguish of soul that she could scarcely support herself. This sore affliction lasted for some months, then gradually abated, and

as it did, she learned to realize the sweet uses of sorrow. Trial, seconded by her own fidelity, had done its work. Faith had triumphed over sense. Like "a two-edged sword reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit" (Heb. iv. 12), it had cut away the last remnant of natural life, and left behind only the supernatural. Long disengaged in mind and heart from all things on earth, she was now so detached even from the consolations of heaven, so singly centred in God alone, that she could rejoice in her spiritual poverty, and thank the Lord for seeming to have withdrawn the favours which in her humility she considered exposed to defilement in passing through her heart. The Almighty who delights in manifesting Himself to the humble, was pleased to reward her fidelity by a lively impression of His adorable attributes, and a clear knowledge of the mysteries contained in the first chapter of St. John. "During a holy week," she says, "our Lord granted me new lights regarding His Divine attributes. I contemplated the Unity of God, and in the Unity, I beheld His Eternity without beginning or end; His immense Greatness; His adorable Infinitude; and in an ecstasy of admiration, I could only exclaim, 'O Goodness! O Immensity! O Eternity!' I understood how all things have their origin in God, from whom emanates whatever is beautiful and good, and I cried, 'O more than Good! more than Beautiful! more than Adorable! Thou art God! Thou art the great God!' Sinking into the very depths of my lowness, feeling in His mighty presence as if I had been the veriest worm, still I could not refrain from telling Him of my love;

still I could not but rejoice that my God is so great ; still I exulted that He is All, and that I am nothing, for if I had been anything, then He would not have been All. O Breadth ! O Length ! O Height ! O Depth ! immense, adorable, incomprehensible to all but Thyself ! my Centre ! my Beginning ! my End ! my Beatitude ! my All ! ” Unable to satisfy her desire to die, if that were possible, in order to render homage to the perfections of her God, she substituted the slow martyrdom of still more rigorous austerities than she had yet practised, and after this new sacrifice, her mind, she says, was so filled with light as to be in a manner dazzled, and as it were blinded by the grandeur of the Majesty of the Most High. Thus purified by trial, sanctified by grace, adorned with virtue, resplendent with Divine love, elevated above earth and self and all their influences, her happy soul presented no farther obstacle to the designs of her all-gracious Lord : it was ready for the ardently desired union with Him, and now, at last, the promise so long made, and the expectations so long cherished, were about to be realized.

CHAPTER VII.

SECOND VISION OF THE MOST ADORABLE TRINITY.— REALIZATION OF THE DIVINE PROMISE.

A SECOND vision of the most august Trinity was granted to Marie Guyart, just two years after she had been favoured with the first. She was then in her twenty-seventh year, and seven years had elapsed since the memorable vision of the application of the

precious blood of Jesus to her soul. In this second vision, the will was more strongly affected than the intellect; the heart absolutely consumed with the burning fire of love; the mind, as before, inundated with floods of light. This grace gave, as it were, the finishing touch to the beauty of her soul, seeming to supply what had hitherto been wanting to its perfection. While her spirit was absorbed, and in a manner annihilated in the contemplation of the three most adorable Persons of the Trinity, the Eternal Word, according to His promise, united her to Himself in close, mysterious bonds which there are no human words to describe.* “He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit” (1 Cor. v. 17).

Often had she sighed for this hour, and with the Spouse in the Canticles besought the Lord to show her His face, and to let her hear His voice—that face so comely, and that voice so sweet. Now at last, possession had replaced hope, so now she might entone the canticle of triumph, “I found him whom my soul loveth: I hold him: and I will not let him go. My beloved to me, and I to him who feedeth among the lilies. Till the” glorious dawn of eternity “break, and the shadows of time retire,” (Cant. iii. 4, ii., 17,) “when I shall see Him as He is, face to face, and know Him even as I am known” (1 Cor. xiii. 12). She seemed to have passed into a new state of being. Ardent as her love of God had been before, it now rose to heights hitherto unknown. Her whole soul appeared to be transformed into love.

* The lives of St. Francis of Assisium, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Gertrude, and some other saints furnish instances of supernatural favours similar to that now granted to the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

Her life became one unbroken act, one uninterrupted hymn of ecstatic love. In the busy streets, in distracting business, amidst household cares and duties, at all times and in all places, she gave vent to her irrepressible transports in the sweet song of ceaseless praise, silently entoned within her own heart, and audible only to her heavenly Spouse and His angels. Even in sleep, she could scarcely be said to discontinue it, for while she slept, her heart watched, and at each interruption to her short repose, it resumed the strain, returning to the actual exercise of love with the first moment of full awakening consciousness. Sometimes fearing that her emotions might betray themselves exteriorly, she relieved their uncontrollable impetuosity by committing them to writing, afterwards burning these effusions. A few of them, however, by chance escaped destruction, and have happily reached us. From these, as well as from the account of her manner of prayer written at the command of one of her confessors, we learn something of the holy ardour which consumed her. "O Love!" she cried, "how sweet Thou art! how captivating are Thy charms! how light Thy bonds! Sometimes Thou woundest, sometimes Thou enslavest, but still art Thou ever sweet. As I am all Thine, so art Thou all mine, mine for ever, O my most desirable Life! And what do I desire of Thee, O my All? I desire Thy love, and Thy love alone. O Love! O great Love! Thou art all, and I am nothing, but it is enough that the mighty All should love the poor nothing, and that the miserable nothing should love the great All! O great God! mayest Thou be blessed by every tongue and loved by every heart!"

The impossibility of satisfying her holy eagerness to be inseparably united to her God, caused her inexplicable suffering. It was death to her that she could not die. "I long, O Lord," she would say, "to be free from the prison of the body, that I may fly to Thee, and behold Thee in all Thy beauty and Divine attractions. O Love! when shall I embrace Thee! When shall I see Thee without cloud or veil! Knowest Thou not that I love but Thee? Come then, that I may expire in Thy sacred arms. To a soul which loves Thee, it is a martyrdom to be separated from Thee, and meantime to see Thee offended by so many of Thy creatures who are insensible to Thy goodness, and indifferent to Thyselv. Oh! take me from this scene of sin and misery where there is nothing but sorrow and affliction of spirit. My heart sighs for Thy eternal mansions; for Thy incomparable beauty; for the consummation of that blissful union, of whose sweetness Thou grantest us a foretaste here below. While the sensible sweetness lasts, we are happy in Thee, our Treasure, our Life, our Love, but no sooner are we left to ourselves, than we feel once more the full force of our poverty and misery. Who will grant to my soul to burst its prison bars and ascend to Thee! May I be all Thine, as Thou art all mine! O Sacred Heart of Jesus! be Thou the Altar of sacrifice on which my heart shall be immolated! O Furnace of charity! enkindle in it that celestial flame in which I desire to be consumed. Can it rest on an Altar of fire and not be set on fire?" But notwithstanding her desire to be dissolved, that she might be with Christ, she loved her Lord's

will too purely to wish for death or life except in conformity to it, therefore she offered herself to bear the burden of existence until the day of judgment, if God could be thus more glorified,—satisfied if meantime she accomplished nothing more than to teach some simple soul to know and love our Blessed Lady. Her chief relief and support was still, as ever, in daily Communion, which uniting her really, though invisibly to her Lord and Treasure, consoled her in some degree for the delay to the eternal union for which she languished. She says of this most adorable Sacrament, "that it is a fathomless and shoreless abyss of grace, and that eternity's light alone will reveal the ineffable wonders which God discovered to her soul at the time of her sacramental union with him."

We know from the testimony of the saints who have endured the martyrdom of Divine love, that the greatest of its pains proceeds from the inability of the soul to love God with an ardour proportioned either to her own desire to love Him, or to the extent of His claims on her love. This suffering the Venerable Mother experienced in its fullest intensity. From her insatiable desire of a more perfect love, sprang a fixed impression of her utter powerlessness to do any thing for, or give any thing to the great and generous God who had given her Himself, and with Himself all things. "Thou hast made me for Thyself, O God !" she would say; "for Thyself who art Love ; why then should I not speak of love ? But alas ! what can I say of it ? I cannot speak of it on earth. The saints who see Thee in heaven, silently adore Thee, and their silence speaks. Why,

O Lord, cannot we burn like them with silent love ? If Thou art their love, Thou art also ours. They see Thee as Thou art, and in this are more favoured than we on earth, but when we are released from this prison, we shall behold Thee like them ; we shall praise, embrace, possess Thee like them ; we shall be absorbed in Thee as they are,—in Thee who art my Love, my only Love, my great and glorious God, my mercy and my All ! ” While her soul was thus rapt in a continual ecstasy of love, her bodily strength wasted away under the action of the consuming fire. In one of the many phases of the martyrdom of love which it was her privilege to pass through, it pleased her Lord that the body should suffer more than the soul, enduring in its turn a real agony, and that so violent, that she says she must have died if it had lasted a few days.

While these miracles of grace were being wrought in the soul of this admirable woman, no external sign gave indication of the work going on within, for she took care to enfold her treasures under the mantle of humility. Always devoted, laborious and active, she seemed altogether intent on her harassing duties, yet, multiplied and fatiguing as these were, she found time to attend to the spiritual interests of her brother’s numerous workmen, sometimes calling them round her to teach them the Christian doctrine, sometimes profiting of conversation at table to speak to them of God and the concerns of their souls. Reverencing her as a saint, they submitted to her like docile children, gave her an account of their conduct, adopted her advice, bore her reproofs, and carried obedience so far as to rise from bed to say

their night prayers, if by accident she discovered that any one had retired without complying with the duty. Solicitous for their temporal, as for their eternal welfare, she interceded for them with her brother-in-law when they had incurred his displeasure, and attended them in sickness with truly maternal devotedness. Although her close attention to the presence of God never interfered with the fulfilment of her duties, it incapacitated her from following up the thread of any conversation unconnected with them. Her brother-in-law perceiving this, sometimes amused himself by asking her a question referring to something that had been said, but her confusion on these occasions was so evident, that in order not to increase it, the subject was quickly changed.

Finally, these vehement transports and exhausting languishings of divine love were succeeded by a profound and permanent calm. Her soul sweetly reposed in God, its Centre—that Centre was within herself, and there she enjoyed a peace surpassing all understanding. In the account written by her confessor's command of the special favours she had received from God, she observes in reference to this highest degree of divine union, that "the soul elevated to it, enjoys as far as possible here below, the felicity of the blessed. Storms," she says, "may sweep over her inferior part, but they do not reach the interior temple where the Spouse reigns, and she rests tranquilly in His presence. It is alike to her whether she is immersed in embarrassing cares, or buried in most profound solitude. Amidst the turmoil of and the distraction of business, she

is alone with God in her heart, enjoying His sweet company, conversing with Him familiarly, transformed as it were into a paradise, of which His smile is the light and the bliss. Vainly would she endeavour to explain what passes in that interior heaven, for the subject is too sublim to come within the reach of weak, defective human language. She is so elevated above the world, that all its combined splendours appear to her but as a contemptible atom of dust. Thus does the Almighty 'raise the needy from the earth, to place them with the princes of his people,' and in doing so, He only exalts His own glory, and shows forth His magnificence."

The intimate union with God, here described, became henceforth the Venerable Mother's habitual condition. It must however be noted that she does not speak of this privileged state as excluding temptation and suff'g, but only says, that violent and frequent as may be their assaults, they do not disturb the inner region of the soul where God has established His Kingdom in peace. The superior part remains tranquil, although the inferior may be troubled and agitated, just as the ocean depths repose in peaceful calm while its surface is lashed by the angry tempest. By noticing this distinction, it will become easy to reconcile the apparently contradictory statements which attribute to the Mother of the Incarnation uninterrupted interior peace, with intense and almost continuous interior suffering.

CHAPTER VIII.

ENTRANCE TO THE URSULINE NOVITIATE AT TOURS.

FROM her early years, the desires of the Venerable Mother had turned to the cloister, as we have already seen. Her engagement in married life had seemed at first to oppose an insuperable obstacle to their fulfilment, but God who had destined her for religion, removed the impediment, leaving her free by the death of her husband to follow her first impulse, as soon as duty should allow her to separate from her little son. That time had now come ; the child had attained his twelfth year, and could dispense with her immediate care. So far, she had faithfully fulfilled her obligations towards him, watching over his infancy and childhood with tender solicitude, training him in the ways of God as she had been trained herself ; forming his tender heart to piety, and giving his first habits the right bent. The impression of her holy instructions and example was never effaced, and when in advanced years he referred to the period of their early companionship, it was in terms of most profound veneration for her virtues, and boundless admiration of her truly celestial life.

Like the storm-tost mariner nearing the haven, or the weary traveller approaching home, she sighed with redoubled ardour for the end of her pilgrimage, now that the end was nigh. It was but natural. Lovely as the tabernacles of the Lord had looked in the distance, their beauty was immeasurably magnified by the closer view. If then she had felt even in the days of her exile, that those are blessed who dwell in

the house of God, can we wonder that she should have absolutely longed and fainted for His courts, now that their portals were about to be thrown open for her admission ? But although the hour of emancipation had come, she was yet ignorant of the particular Order to which God called her. The perusal of the works of St. Teresa had inspired her with a strong attraction for the Carmelites, whose particular profession of prayer and recollection exactly harmonized with her own inclination and practice. On the other hand, the General of the Feuillants, anxious to secure so precious a treasure for his own Order, offered in the most flattering manner to receive her, promising to relieve her of all future anxiety regarding the education of her son. This latter condition was of such vital importance, that the proposal filled her with joy and gratitude. Besides, to the Carmelite spirit of prayer and solitude, the Feuillantine Sisters added the practice of great austerities, thus presenting a two-fold attraction to the holy widow. Yet it was not to either of these Orders that God called her, nor was it indeed to a purely contemplative life that her own thoughts had originally turned. On the contrary, her earliest inclination had been for the Ursulines, although strangely enough, she had no acquaintance whatever with them, and could not even have told where they were to be found. She merely knew in a general way, that the special object of their institute is the salvation of souls, and that its mixed life of action and prayer closely resembles the public life of our Lord on earth. These two considerations had always strongly influenced her in its favour, never-

theless, the more austere Orders had not lost their charms, so, as God had not yet clearly manifested His will, she waited calmly until circumstances should reveal it beyond a doubt. At length Divine Providence interposed. About this very period, it happened that the Ursulines established themselves at Tours, and as if to facilitate her introduction to them, it further chanced that after a short time they removed from the house they had first inhabited, to one quite near the residence of her brother. Some secret attraction seemed to draw her in the direction of the new convent, which she never passed without experiencing an indescribable emotion, and a strong impulse to linger round the precincts. In this monastery there lived a saintly religious, who had been led to exalted virtue through much the same paths as those which she had herself trodden. These two souls, alike privileged by grace, were destined as mutual helps to perfection, and for the furtherance of this great design, the wondrous providence of God had so arranged events that without premeditation on either side, both should be associated in community life. Their acquaintance originated in a visit which the holy widow had occasion to pay at the convent. At the first interview, each felt that she was understood by the other, yet although their intimacy soon ripened into a saintly friendship, Marie Guyart could never prevail on herself to speak of her perplexities to Mother Francis of St. Bernard, wishing as ever to leave herself altogether in the hands of God. Meantime Mother St. Bernard was elected Superior of the new monastery, and no sooner had she taken office than she felt inspired to

make overtures to her friend to join the community. Having obtained the necessary permissions, she sent for her, and in a few kind words offered her a place among the sisters. The generous proposal did not take the holy woman by surprise, for as she was entering the house, a strong presentiment had seized her as to the direct purport of the visit. Full of joy and thankfulness, she humbly expressed her gratitude, and asked leave, before replying, to consult God and her director. The latter was a man eminently versed, as already noticed, in the science of guiding souls. The better to try her vocation, he received the application with apparent coldness, and seemed for a while to have given up all idea of her quitting the world, so her state of indecision continued. But one day, while she was in prayer, all doubts as to her future course were suddenly and completely removed. Her temporary inclination for the more austere Orders instantaneously vanished, giving place to an ardent, fixed desire to join the Ursulines, and that as speedily as could be accomplished. Her director recognised the voice of God in the urgent inspiration, and exhorted her to obey it without hesitation or delay.

But it was not to be expected that Satan would relinquish the prize without yet another struggle. The career of the future Ursuline was to bring great glory to God through the salvation of many souls; clearly, then, his interest demanded a last strong effort to deter her from the life to which her Master called her. The artifice employed was so much the more dangerous, as it wore the semblance of good. The tempter represented her flight from the world

as a violation of her duty to her little son, suggesting that so unnatural a neglect of her sacred maternal obligations could not but compromise her own salvation, as well as the highest and dearest interests of her child. To the stratagems of Satan were added the persuasive entreaties of some of her friends, and the violent opposition of others. The two-fold conflict was a hard one, but, aided by divine grace, she conquered nature once again, as she had so often done before, and God was pleased to reward her fidelity by so effectually changing the views of her sister and her brother-in-law, that in the end they not only consented to her departure, but even promised to take care of her child.

One more ordeal remained, and it was, indeed, a severe one. She had not yet acquainted her son with her intention, but he seemed to have an instinctive presentiment of some event of more than ordinary consequence to him. He noticed that he had all at once become a general object of silent sympathy. The compassion which he read on every face communicated its saddening influence to his little heart; the low tone in which people spoke in his presence, excited his suspicions. Oppressed by the sense of some painful mystery, he took refuge at first in solitude and tears, and before long, unable to bear up against the weight of melancholy, he made up his mind to go away altogether from the scene of his troubles. A fortnight before the time appointed for his mother's entrance to the convent, he managed to escape unobserved from the school where he was then a boarder. The discovery of his flight seemed a signal for general censure of his mother. The world

declared that she alone was to be blamed for the disaster—she alone to be held accountable for its consequences. It was difficult to bear, and that, too, at a time when her whole soul was rent with anguish, when every feeling of nature re-echoed, while every instinct of grace obliged her to resist the mighty pleadings of maternal love. The terrible interior combat was immeasurably aggravated by her efforts to maintain external composure. In her great sorrow she turned for comfort to her friend at the Ursulines, and had scarcely concluded her sad account when her director, Dom Raymond, happened also to call at the monastery. From the habitual charity of this good religious, she naturally expected his especial sympathy at this trying moment. Great, then, was her dismay to find that far from attempting to assuage, he seemed determined, on the contrary, to irritate the wound. Well convinced by experience of the solidity of her virtue, he seized the present apparently inopportune occasion of testing it anew. Assuming great sternness of voice and manner, he told her it was easy to see that her virtue was only superficial, since she manifested so great a want of submission to God's will, and of faith in His providence, adding that her excessive attachment to a creature clearly indicated the ascendancy which nature still retained over her. Kneeling before her censor, the humble mother listened to the harsh reproof in profound silence, but a sigh escaped her, and this Dom Raymond declared to be a distinct confirmation of his late assertions, ordering her to depart at once from the house of God, which was not meant to harbour souls so imperfect as she was. She

immediately rose, and, with a low inclination to her director, left the convent. Perfectly amazed at the heroism of her virtue, the Reverend Father and the Mother Superior returned thanks to God for having permitted them to witness so wonderful an example, and, without informing her of it, sent messengers at their own expense to seek her son, those whom she had herself employed not having discovered any trace of him.

By a singular coincidence, the flight of her boy occurred during the octave of the Epiphany, when the Church reads the history of the loss of Jesus in the temple, and it also happened that he, like the Divine Child, was twelve years of age at the time of his disappearance. These circumstances greatly consoled the poor mother in her bereavement : she united her desolation with that of the Mother of Sorrows, and hoped that, like her, she would recover her son at the end of three days, and so it actually happened. Precisely at that time he was brought back by a person who had accidentally met him at Blois. He then owned that he had planned to go to Paris, where he hoped to be received by a partner of his uncle's, resident in that city. The child's return removed the last obstacle to her departure ; and now the day was fixed irrevocably, notwithstanding the renewed entreaties of her relatives ; notwithstanding the tears of her father ; notwithstanding the agony of her own soul at the parting from her only child whom she loved most tenderly. She recalled the declaration of our Lord that "he who loves father or mother, son or daughter more than Him is not worthy of Him" (St. Matt. x. 37), and the words

inspired her with invincible courage. No sooner was her final decision taken than uncertainty and perplexity vanished utterly.

For the preceding ten years it had been her aim indirectly to prepare the little Claude for the separation which she knew must one day come. Believing that the less she had accustomed him to external demonstrations of affection, the less also he would miss her presence and feel her loss, she had made it a rule from the time he was two years old, never to fondle or embrace him, carrying self-denial in this particular so far as to discourage even his own childish caresses and endearments. Yet though grave, he found her ever kind and gentle; though reserved, sweet-tempered and inaccessible to caprice; though undemonstrative, solidly devoted to his interests and tenderly alive to his wants; so it happened after all that he loved her fondly, and all the more so, perhaps, that unknown to himself, his love was founded on reverence.

How shall the mother summon courage to bid him adieu? Where find words to say that although he should ever dwell in her heart, her home and his could be one no longer? That, already deprived by death of one parent, he was now by her own voluntary act to lose the second too? Poor mother! great is thy sorrow, yet not as that of another Martyr-Mother, whose story of anguish thou knowest well. It was at the foot of the cross that she bade adieu to her Son; there, too, must thou bravely stand by her side to say farewell to thine. The virtue of the cross will strengthen thee as it strengthened her; and when thy sacrifice is accomplished, thou wilt find a

balm for thy wounded heart by uniting it to the broken heart of Jesus on the cross, and of Mary standing in its shade.

Summoning the boy to her side, she said, " My son, I have a great secret to tell you. I have hitherto concealed it, because you were not old enough to understand its importance, but now that you are becoming more sensible, and that I am on the point of taking the step to which this great secret refers, I can no longer hesitate to confide it to you. When your father was taken from us, God immediately inspired me with the resolution of forsaking the world and embracing the religious life. I could not carry out this intention at once, for you were too young to dispense with my care, but now that this is no longer the case, I must follow the call of God without farther delay. I might have gone away without forewarning you, for when salvation is in question, as in the present instance, God's command must absolutely be obeyed, but to spare you a painful shock, I determined to tell you my plans, and ask your consent to their accomplishment. God wishes this parting, my son, and if we love Him we must wish it too. If this separation afflicts you, think of the great honour which the Almighty does me in calling me to His service. Remember too what a happiness it will be for you to know henceforth that your mother is occupied day and night in praying for your salvation. This being so, will you not give me leave to obey God, who commands me to go away ? "

Awed and bewildered by the solemnity of the address, the child could only say, " But I shall never see you again ? "

"Not so, my son," replied the courageous mother; "on the contrary, you will see me whenever you like; I am only going to the Ursulines, who you know live quite close, and you can come to me there as often as you please."

"In that case," he said, "I am satisfied."

An oppressive weight seemed to have been taken from the mother's heart; now she could breathe freely! "I should have found it very hard to part from you, my child," she said, "if you had refused, because I do not like to give you pain, but as you are contented, I shall leave you tranquilly in the hands of God. I bequeath to you no worldly wealth, for as the Lord is my inheritance, so do I desire that He should be yours. If you fear and love Him, you will be rich enough. I entrust you to a heavenly Mother who will amply make up to you for my loss, for her power to serve you is far greater than mine. Love that dear Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary; be faithful to her; call on her as your Mother; turn to her in all your wants, reminding her that you are her child, and that she is bound to take care of your interests, and be sure that she will never forsake you. I have placed you in the charge of my sister, who has promised me to love you and watch over you. Show her always the same affection and respect as you have shown me. Serve God faithfully; keep his commandments; love Him, and He will love you and provide for you in whatever position you may be placed. Adieu, my son." Then she directed him to kneel at her feet, and repressing every appearance of emotion, calmly made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and gave him her

solemn blessing. It was the last caress and the last farewell of this heroic woman to her only child ; henceforth he was to be the child of providence, and she was to be as if his mother no more. God, jealous of her undivided love, would admit no rival in her heart ; over that, He designed to reign sole Sovereign.

This most painful scene over, the remaining trials seemed easy to bear. She bade adieu to her weeping relatives, and even to her aged father, without betraying a symptom of the agony which rent her soul, and then, on the 25th of January, the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, in the year 1631, she left her sister's house, accompanied by numerous friends. The little procession was headed by her niece whom she had asked to precede her with a crucifix, the standard which she had ever so faithfully followed, and to which she was now proving the truth of her allegiance by the severing of every human tie, and the sacrifice of every human feeling. At her side walked her little son, silent and tearful, but quiet and resigned. She alone of the whole party manifested no agitation ; her step was firm ; her demeanour calm, her countenance beaming as if with light from heaven. Yet the superhuman victory was not achieved without mortal anguish ; every tear of the weeping child at her side made her heart bleed afresh ; every sob seemed to lacerate her soul, but she says, in alluding afterwards to her emotions on the occasion, " Much as I loved my son, I loved my God far more."

At the door of the monastery, she smilingly repeated her farewell to the child and the rest of the

party, and a moment after, was joyfully and lovingly welcomed by the Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent.

CHAPTER IX.

SAINT ANGELA AND THE URSULINES.

IT was in the sixteenth century that the Ursuline Order took its rise. The epoch was one peculiarly disastrous in the Church's history. Luther's heresy was working evil on a gigantic scale. It had spread from nation to nation with the rapidity of a pestilential contagion, blighting with its deadly venom all it touched, and everywhere marking its progress by a wide track of spiritual ruin and desolation, as well as of political anarchy and social disorganization. Each new success of its unholy work, necessarily inflicted a new pang on the heart of the sorrowing Spouse of Christ. Day after day, she had to weep afresh over some new profanation of her sanctuaries, some new desertion of her faithless children, some aggravated treason against her God. Nor was it only the ravages of heresy that she had to lament, but perhaps still more, the disloyalty of too many among her still nominal adherents. While a vast number of her disciples revolted openly against her authority, others who recognised it in words, rejected it in practice. Where the light of faith had not been utterly extinguished, the fire of charity had but too often cooled. The lower classes were ignorant, the better instructed careless; both more or less indifferent. Worse than all, the very guar-

dians of the fold had in too many instances proved false to their sacred trust, so intent on the advancement of their own worldly interests, as to concern themselves very little for the protection of their perishing flocks. The ever spreading torrent of corruption and infidelity, looked, as though in its fully gathered strength, it might one day inundate the world. Where could an efficacious barrier be found to its farther progress ? The question was a momentous one, involving the honour even of Him who had given His life-blood to purchase the very souls of whom Satan was thus making an easy prey. All unknown to each other, two faithful children of the mourning Mother were just then occupied in studying the grand problem, and both succeeded in discovering the solution. Yet a few years, and they would give the world the practical result of their researches in the institution of their respective Orders, the Jesuits and the Ursulines. With the latter, the name of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation is so closely interwoven, that a few words on the rise and progress of the Order, naturally find a place in her biography.

Saint Angela Merici, the Foundress of the Ursulines, was born on the 21st of March, 1474, therefore was considerably advanced in life when Luther took up arms against the Church. Dezenzano, her birth-place, stands on the south-west bank of the picturesque Lago di Garda in the Venetian States, about seventeen miles from Brescia. It is ever the saints whom God employs to do His work, and in the present instance, neither the work nor the instrument was to be an exception to the rule.

Angela entered on the path of sanctity almost at the same time as on the path of life, and as she advanced in years, kept ever redoubling her pace, until at last she may be said to have flown, rather than walked along the blessed way. From her earliest days she evinced a dread of sin, a love of prayer and solitude, and an inclination for the severities of penance, very unusual in children. Ever cherishing a supreme, absorbing desire to live for God alone, she perpetually added fuel to the heavenly fire by frequent communion, prolonged prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and similar holy practices, unhappily at that time but little observed. After her admission to the Third Order of St. Francis, she placed so little limit to her austerities, that she might with strict truth have been called a living victim of perpetual penance. Her life became one almost unbroken fast, and she was often known to pass a week at a time without any other food than the heavenly manna of daily communion. To such perfection did she carry her spirit of poverty, that after making the simple vow in the Third Order, she would live only on alms, taking her rest on a mat or a bundle of faggots, with a stone for her pillow. Thus, as years went on, her ever increasing beauty of soul, seemed even more than her remarkable external attractions, to give literal significance to her name,—Angela, the Angel.

But her personal sanctification, although her first, was not her only aim. God had called her to work for other souls as well as her own, and her apostolic vocation began early to assert itself. The deplorable decay of faith and piety among nominal Christians of her day, weighed heavily on her heart. Not

content with simply lamenting the growing evil, she longed for the power to check it. But how could she? How could a feeble woman arrest an impetuous torrent? Again and again she asked herself the question, and again and again, clearer than the heaven's light, came the answer;—if the vices of the adult generation were traceable in a great degree to the want of early Christian training—as who could doubt?—was it not manifest that the only check to the transmission of its irreligious spirit, was the careful education of the young? Yes; let the ignorant be taught, and little by little God's work would be done. Success might at first be small, but it would be certain. Each mind enlightened, would be a heart converted, and even one was worth labouring for. The single child trained to piety, would at a future day become a religious mother, capable of imparting to her own family the holy impressions which she had herself received; the circle of good would go on extending for ever, and only God could see its final limits. Thus Angela reasoned, and without delay she determined to carry out her conclusions.

It was about her twenty-first year that she began her labour of zeal and love, by assembling the little children of Dezenzano for catechism, and instructing a vast number of adults in the Christian doctrine. Her assistants were four in number, and like herself members of the Third Order of St. Francis. It was but a diminutive plant that sprang at first from the seed then deposited in the garden of God, but the blessing of the Most High rested on the feeble seedling, and in that divine sunshine it thrived and

grew, until at last it expanded into a great tree, of which the historian Time can tell no tale, save that although ages and storms have passed over it, its heart is fresh, its growth is steady, and its roots are firm to-day, as in the early years, when sown by the hand, and fostered by the care of Angela, it gave its young promise of luxuriance and stability. Though she did not live to witness the full realization of that promise, she was permitted to foresee its accomplishment in a celestial vision granted her much about the period of the opening of her apostolate at Dezenzano. One day, while praying with great earnestness for Divine guidance, a high ladder, like that shown to Jacob, suddenly appeared before her. One end of it rested on the ground, the other touched the heavens. Down this ladder, a resplendent band of virgins slowly descended, moving two and two with perfectly regularity, and accompanied by angels. Their number was very great ; their garments were rich ; their crowns were studded with gems of wondrous beauty, and they sang a sweet canticle, to which their angelic guardians responded in choir. Overwhelmed with astonishment, she looked and listened, utterly unable to comprehend the mystery. At last she recognised in the procession a beloved companion recently deceased, who told her to take courage, for that she was the instrument chosen by the Almighty to establish at Brescia a society of virgins similar to those she then beheld. The revelation was too convincing to leave room for doubt, yet so profound was the saint's humility, so deep her sense of her own unworthiness and incapacity, that she permitted full forty years to pass

without taking any decided measures for its accomplishment. The vision, however, served to add new fire to her zeal for the Divine honour, and to intensify her already ardent love for her neighbour. She became absolutely indefatigable in her efforts for the diffusion of religious instruction, the reconciliation of enemies, the consolation of the afflicted, and the conversion of sinners, sparing neither time, fatigue, nor even frequent journeys in furtherance of these and similar objects of charity; working among the poor from preference, but never refusing her help to those also of the better class who sought it. But holy and profitable as was the work at Dezenzano, she knew all along that it was only preparatory to the greater work at Brescia. "Take courage, Angela," said the prophecy, "for thou shalt found a company of virgins such as these at Brescia." The prediction was explicit as to her future destiny, but vague as to the period of fulfilment. To that there might be still, as there had already been, a long delay, but she believed that in His own time, the Almighty would provide for its accomplishment, and for that time she waited tranquilly, devoting herself meanwhile to her humble labours at Dezenzano as entirely as if she had not known full well that Dezenzano was not her ultimate destination. And in His own time God did interpose. By means apparently the most simple and natural, his ever-watchful Providence prepared the way at last for her removal to Brescia, using as its instruments, two distinguished inhabitants of that city, whose names her historians have handed down to us, Jerom Patengola and his virtuous consort Catherine. It happened that this pious couple had

some years before become acquainted with Saint Angela, in one of their annual visits to their large estates near Dezenzano, and finding the intimacy highly conducive to their spiritual interests, they had cultivated it assiduously. In 1516, it pleased God to deprive them in rapid succession of their only children, two daughters, in whom their hearts and earthly hopes were centred. In the excess of their anguish, they turned for comfort to their saintly friend, beseeching her to come to them without delay. They had been kind benefactors to her little society, gratitude therefore, as well as charity, pleaded their cause with her sisters and her spiritual advisers, who all agreed that such claims were irresistible. Looking on the decision as a manifestation of the Divine will, she accordingly left Dezenzano where for twenty years she had pursued her mission of love, and proceeded to Brescia, the city of the promise, having first secured that the work at Dezenzano should be continued by her sisters whom she intended to rejoin as soon as possible.

Her visit to Brescia proved a source not only of immense consolation to her sorrowing friends, but of spiritual benefit to the whole city. To win all to God by prayer, instruction, and example, was still as ever, the aim of her life. Attracted by the reputation of her sanctity, as well as of her natural abilities and supernatural enlightenment, persons of every rank came to her for advice, and all withdrew benefited by her counsels, filled with admiration of her wisdom, and edified by her equally striking charity, sweetness and humility. It was about this period that she received an infused knowledge of

Latin, which she could understand, speak and translate without having learned it; also of the holy Scriptures, on the most difficult passages of which she could comment with wonderful ease and unction.

Her original intention had been, as we have seen, to return to Dezenzano, as soon as her work of charity in Brescia was completed; she had not however been long in the latter city, when she became convinced that God willed her to remain there. The memorable vision of bygone years had assuredly never at any time faded from her memory; it must on the contrary have formed the constant subject of her communications with God, but after her removal to Brescia, it pursued her with an almost painful persistence. Not once only, but continuously, uninterruptedly, it stood before her in all the distinctness of its first vivid colouring, and all the minuteness of its smallest details, so that whatever her occupations, alone or conversing with others, in the church and in her room, at all times and in all places, she seemed ever to see the mysterious ladder with its glorious throng of gem-crowned virgins and dazzling angels; she seemed ever to hear the words of the yet unrealized promise, "Take courage, Angela, for thou shalt found a company of virgins like to these at Brescia." Concluding at last that this almost importunate voice from the past, must be intended as a warning to guide her movements in the present, she prayed with all the earnestness of her soul that the Almighty would manifest His designs, and enable her by His grace to carry them out most perfectly. In answer to her prayer she clearly understood that God willed her to remain at Brescia, and she accordingly

established herself in a retired lodging in the town, there to continue her career of zeal and usefulness; —but many years more were to elapse before the foundation of her Order.

Pilgrimages to consecrated spots seem to have been one of her favourite practices of piety. Two years after her arrival at Brescia, she made one to the tomb of the Venerable Mother Hosanna Andreassi, a religious of the Order of St. Dominick, who had lately died at Mantua in the odour of sanctity. Six years later, in 1524, her ardent love of our Divine Redeemer prompted her to undertake a journey of devotion to the Holy Land. On the way, God was pleased to test her love of the cross by a most severe affliction. Just as the vessel touched the port of Canea in the island of Candia, which she was the first to discern, she was in one instant struck with total blindness, to the inexpressible sorrow and consternation of her companions. The trial was a peculiarly painful one, and it served to display the heroism of her virtue in a clearer light than ever. She accepted it in the spirit of the saints, and refusing the kind offers of her friends to accompany her back to Italy, she completed the journey to Palestine, now attended with so much additional difficulty. In the Holy Land, she redoubled her habitual most rigorous fasts and other austerities, and as if to compensate for being denied a sight of the blessed places which she had come so far to see, she poured out her heart's love over them with a seraphic fervour which sensibly affected the spectators. On her journey homewards, her patient submission was rewarded by the recovery of her sight at the very place where

she had lost it. This favour was granted her while she prayed with great devotion before a celebrated image of the Crucifixion, exposed to public veneration in one of the churches of the town. After a narrow escape from shipwreck, she reached Venice, and so strong was the impression of her sanctity produced in that city by the reports of her companion pilgrims, that she was earnestly entreated to fix her abode there, and take charge of some of its institutions of charity. Tempting as was the offer, she resolutely declined it, for she knew that God's will called her to Brescia, where after an absence of six months, she returned, to the great joy of the inhabitants.

But before again settling down to her old manner of life in this home of her adoption, she had yet another journey of devotion to accomplish. Next to the consecrated land of Palestine, Catholic Rome had ever presented the strongest attractions to her faith and piety. She longed to pray at the shrine of the Princes of the Apostles; to kiss the soil bedewed with their blood, and as a faithful daughter of the Church, to kneel at the feet of God's visible representative, and beg his blessing on her projected work. The publication of the great Jubilee of 1525, by Pope Clement VII., supplied a fitting opportunity of carrying out her pious wishes. In company with one of the numerous bands of pilgrims who thronged the ways, she proceeded to the holy City, and here, not only had she the consolation of receiving the benediction of his Holiness, but she was honoured by an invitation from him to remain permanently at Rome, and accept the superintendence of some of the

public institutions for the sick poor. This offer she humbly declined like that at Venice, and for the same reasons, and returning once more to Brescia, resumed her life of retirement, mortification and charity. At the end of nearly four years, she was unexpectedly compelled to leave the city once again. The Duchy of Milan was at this time passing through a severe political crisis. It had long been the theatre of a disastrous struggle originating in the pretensions of the French Kings, Louis XII. and Francis I., to the reversion of its crown, and as a portion of the Duchy, Brescia had been more or less involved in the troubles of the times. In 1529, the date which we have reached, the war had lasted for many years, and with varied success; Louis and Francis had each in turn won and lost the prize. One Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, had died a prisoner in France; another, Maximilian, had resigned his claim; a third, Francis, had fled from his dominions. In 1525, Francis I. of France had been totally defeated at Pavia by the confederate princes, at the head of whom was the Emperor Charles V., but this event had not pacified the distracted country, as might have been hoped. The victorious imperial troops continued to overrun the north of Italy, and serious apprehensions were entertained, that in the flush of success, they would lay siege to Brescia. Rather than risk a renewal of the horrors of the first siege in 1512, many of the inhabitants determined to abandon the city without delay. Among others, Angela was induced to accompany a family of her acquaintance to the neighbouring town of Cremona. Here she was

visited as usual by numbers of persons of all conditions seeking advice or consolation, and among others by the fugitive Duke of Milan, Francis Sforza, who in his reverses had sought an asylum at Brescia, and thence followed the refugees to Cremona. He had already met the saint during his stay at Brescia, and her gentle counsels had materially helped him to meet his afflictions in the spirit of Christian resignation. Angela was happily instrumental to many signal conversions at Cremona, but her active career was suddenly arrested by an illness which brought her apparently to the gates of death. There seemed little human probability that so utterly exhausted a frame could resist so violent a malady, but she had yet a work to do, and ardently as she sighed for her heavenly country, her exile was to be prolonged until that work had been accomplished. Contrary to expectation, she recovered under circumstances deemed miraculous, and in thanksgiving for her wondrous restoration, made a pilgrimage in company with other devout persons to a renowned sanctuary of our Blessed Lady in the environs. On the conclusion of peace in 1530, she returned to Brescia after six months' absence.

Although in her humility and self-distrust she still shrank as much as ever from the responsibility of founding a religious Order, she could not conceal from herself that the time had come, when, for various reasons, decisive measures should no longer be deferred. Urged onwards by the counsels of her director, as well as by the voice of inspiration, she therefore determined at last to take the definite, though only preparatory step, of assembling a few com-

panions whom she could gradually initiate in her views and form to the intended institute. Accordingly, about the end of the year 1533, she proposed to twelve pious ladies of the town to associate themselves with her in a life of prayer and good works, to which they readily agreed. She then explained to them the nature and object of the future foundation in which they would one day be expected to co-operate with her, at the same time suggesting the necessity of a certain course of preliminary training under her personal direction. With one accord they placed themselves wholly at the disposal of the saintly Mother, who devoted herself with all the ardour of her zeal to imbue them thoroughly with the true spirit of the holy state to which they aspired. She allowed them to reside with their families as before, but required that they should assemble every day in a common oratory for prayer and instruction, and employ their time in the particular works of charity appointed at the daily meetings. These were held at first in a room given to the saint by the Canons of the Church of St. Afra; it adjoined the church, which enabled her to spend a considerable portion of the night in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Being soon found too small for a general oratory, a more commodious one was substituted through the generosity of a pious widow.

For two years more, no farther progress was made. Angela was sixty-one, and the prophetic vision of full forty years before, was but a vision still. When would it become a reality? Soon now, for our Lord Himself was about to interpose, and by mingled reproach and reproof, to conquer the irre-

solution of His humble servant. Condescending to appear to her in person, He reprimanded her for her hesitation, thus at once overwhelming her with regret and confusion, and dispelling every lingering shadow of doubt as to His designs. A moment's hesitation after this would have seemed too long; she commenced her preparations at once, and on the feast of St. Catherine, November 25th, 1535, just one year after the establishment of the Society of Jesus, she inaugurated the infant institute at Brescia. On the same day, she was joined by fifteen additional members, making with the original twelve, the twenty-seven pillars on which the edifice was to rest, she being herself the foundation stone. Too humble to attach her own name to the Congregation, she decided on giving it that of the Holy Virgin and Martyr St. Ursula, who had previously appeared to her in a celestial vision, and encouraged her to carry out her inspiration.

In the design of Saint Angela, the life of the Ursuline was to be a union of prayer and action. She was to employ nearly as much time in the functions of Mary as if belonging to the contemplative orders, and to devote herself besides to the instruction of the ignorant, and first, and before all, to the education of the young. With these, the duties forming her specific end, she was to combine the special practices now attached to the Sisters of Charity.

Considering the spiritual apathy then so generally prevalent, it was not to be expected that persons needing instruction would go far to seek it, therefore, to adapt her work to the exigencies of the age,

Saint Angela decided that instead of retiring within convent walls, the members of the Society should continue to live in their own homes, whence they could more easily go in pursuit of the ignorant, and where too they would have wider opportunities of, doing good by the silent influence of example. "In these critical times," said the holy Foundress, "let us place models of virtue in the midst of the corrupt world itself, and oppose living barriers to the ravages of heresy and the inroads of vice." The Sisters were to continue to meet at their oratory for spiritual exercises, conferences, and necessary business arrangements; their dress was to be dark in colour and plain in texture, but no particular form was made obligatory. Foreseeing the social changes which time would effect, St. Angela with her characteristic prudence empowered the Sisters to modify the manner of life now adopted, as future circumstances might render it desirable. She arranged in detail the internal organization of the Society, and her regulations bore ample evidence to her wisdom, intelligence and heavenly enlightenment. The Rule drawn up by the holy Foundress, and accepted by the Sisters, received the unqualified approval of the Bishop of Brescia, and on the 18th of March, 1537, she was unanimously elected first Superior of the Society, notwithstanding her earnest petition to be allowed to labour until death in the lowest rank, which she said was the only one suited to her. It is a tradition among the Ursulines, that on the eve of the election, the glorious St. Ursula again appeared to her during one of her frequent ecstasies, and consoled her by the assurance that she had taken the institution under

her special patronage, that it was agreeable to God, and that it would be perpetuated from age to age, even to the end of the world. In little more than a month after its foundation, the number of the members had increased from twenty-seven to seventy-two, all filled with the spirit of their holy Mother; all inflamed with liveliest zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of their neighbour. They were to be seen teaching the ignorant, relieving the poor, visiting the prisons and hospitals, and diffusing all around the good odour of Jesus Christ, and so great was the veneration which the Society inspired, that it was usually designated as *the holy Company*. Far from opposing, the authorities both civil and ecclesiastical favoured its progress, and the highest dignitaries of the city gladly assisted at the spiritual instructions given on certain days in the oratory of Saint Angela and her Sisters.

The first great aim of the new Superior was to train her fervent novices to perfection, inspiring them with thorough detachment from the world, an ardent desire of God's glory, and a tender charity for their neighbour. Her second object was to procure the solemn approbation of the Holy See for the Society; but this she did not live to receive, having survived the foundation only three years. In the spring of 1539 she gradually sank into a state of utter physical exhaustion, which she correctly interpreted as a certain, though not, perhaps, an immediate, forerunner of dissolution. She lingered until the commencement of the following year, when, increased debility warning her that the end could not be far distant, she summoned the leading

members of the Society to receive her last counsels. Happily the golden words had been previously committed to writing, and thus the treasure has descended to her spiritual daughters of all generations. She concluded her impressive advice to the Directresses by making them the bearers of her final farewell to all the Sisters. "Tell them," she said, "that I shall ever be in the midst of them, and that I shall know them better, and help them more efficaciously, after my departure, than when on earth. Tell them not to grieve at our temporary separation, but to look forward to our meeting in heaven, where Jesus reigns. Let them raise their hearts and hopes to that blessed home, high above this passing world, seeking their Treasure and their Friend in Jesus alone, who sits at the right hand of the Father in the kingdom of eternal peace." Her "Last Testament," as it was called, was addressed to the Sisters in general, and reserved by her own direction to be read to them after her death. As a compendium of her lessons of holiness, and an effusion of her sweet spirit of charity, it may well be considered a legacy worthy of such a Mother. It concludes by the consoling declaration that "the Society is assuredly the work of the hand of the Most High, who will never abandon that work while time endures."

And now the earthly task of the dying saint was accomplished. After lingering yet a few days among her sorrowing children, she received the last rites of the Church in presence of the whole Ursuline family, numbering one hundred and fifty members, and, after the solemn ceremony, exhorted

them to charity, obedience, humility, observance of rule and love of God. "O Jesus!" she said in conclusion, "bless this company of virgins irreversibly consecrated to Thy service. Grant that as they increase in numbers, they may also grow in grace, in fervour and in wisdom before Thee and before Thy servants." At her own desire she had been clothed in the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, and that she might die in the practice of her beloved poverty, she had herself removed, tradition says, from the poor bed she had occupied in her illness, to the rush mat on the ground which had formed her ordinary resting-place in health. Her dying words were fervent acts of the theological virtues, but she seemed to dwell, by preference, on the act of charity, returning to it continually. "Yes, my God, I love Thee!" she said. "Why cannot I love Thee infinitely? Holy Virgin! Blessed Spirits! lend me your hearts to love Jesus. How long shall I be banished from Thy presence, O Lord? Who will give me wings to fly to Thee, the only Object of my love? Break the chains of my captivity. Receive the soul which languishes for Thee; which can no longer live without Thee." Then, with Jesus on the cross, she exclaimed, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" They were her last words, no sooner spoken than she gave up her soul to God—"peacefully," says her historian, "as a child composing itself to sleep in its mother's arms." She died on the 27th of January, 1540, at half-past nine in the evening, aged sixty-six or sixty-seven.

Her precious remains repose in the Church of St.

Afra, at Brescia, and are in a state of wonderful preservation. They are clothed in the brown habit of St. Francis, with its white cord. The apartment in which she breathed her last has been kept with religious veneration in exactly the same condition as when she occupied it during life, except for the introduction of a few engravings representing the principal events of her history. On the wall, opposite the window, is an inscription, in gilt letters, to the following effect:—"This poor room was the resort of the most learned theologians and the most gifted ecclesiastics, who departed from their conferences with St. Angela, amazed at the lights which she had communicated to them." Her portrait, preserved at Brescia, and said to be a true likeness, is of great beauty; it was taken after death. Her statue at St. Peter's occupies the first niche on the upper row at the left of the Confession of St. Peter. Although of colossal dimensions, its elevated position apparently reduces it to life-size. It is a common tribute of love and veneration from all her children throughout the world. The name of Angela was enrolled on the catalogue of the saints in 1807 by Pope Pius VII. In the foregoing outline of her history, no attempt has been made to portray the beauty of that inner life, which is to the saint what the perfume is to the rose. Many elaborate works have already done justice to the subject, which does not enter into a passing notice like the present, intended only to trace to its origin the Order illustrated by the virtues of the Mother of the Incarnation, as well as of its holy Foundress.

On the 9th of June, 1544, Pope Paul III. granted

a Bull approving and confirming the Institution of St. Angela, but, as already noticed, she had then been called to her reward. After her death, the institute spread rapidly through many towns of Italy. Among the first to adopt it was Dezenzano, the scene of her early labours. In Milan, especially, it found an efficacious patron and protector in the great St. Charles Borromeo, to whose zeal it is immensely indebted. In 1568 he introduced it into his diocese, where it spread so wonderfully that, in the capital alone, it counted eighteen houses and six hundred sisters.

We have seen that the saintly Foundress gave an anticipated sanction, for such modifications of the primitive Rule as might be found necessary in the practical development of the great work which she had lived to establish, but not to perfect. The first modification was introduced by St. Charles. Anxious to consolidate a work whose utility to the Church he clearly foresaw, he procured from Pope Gregory XIII. a Bull renewing and ratifying the first approval of the Rule, authorizing Ursulines to make the three simple vows after a probation of one or two years, and permitting them to live in community. He also organized the schools, and introduced a mitigated form of cloister, the Sisters not being allowed to leave the house without a particular permission. This branch of the Society is known as the Congregation of Milan.

But although the Ursuline Order took its rise in Italy, its perfect development is to be sought in France, a country connected with the name of its glorious Patroness, St. Ursula, as Italy is identified

with that of its blessed Foundress, St. Angela. It was to the French shores that the royal maiden was steering her course when she and her retinue fell into the hands of the savage Huns, and, in defending the crown of their virginity, won, in addition, the diadem of martyrs. Here, then, we naturally expect to find a numerous company rallying round the standard of St. Ursula and St. Angela; nor are we disappointed. Before the great Revolution, France numbered fully three hundred and sixty houses of the Order; many of those then suppressed, have not been restored, yet she still counts at least one hundred and thirty, and it is her especial boast that, while in other lands the Ursuline has lived and laboured for her Master's cause, here she has not only lived and laboured, but died a martyr's death for it.

The first house of French Ursulines was established at Avignon in 1594 by two ladies named De Bermond. This branch of the Society, known as the Congregation of Avignon, adopted the Rules of the Congregation of Milan, and quickly spread through other parts of Provence. A few years later, the Institute of St. Angela was introduced into Paris by Madame Acarie, now venerated as the saintly Carmelite, Blessed Mary of the Incarnation. Though not the second foundation in order of date, the Paris house occupies a prominent position in the annals of the Ursulines, as their first monastery. As we have already more than once observed, the Sisters were not originally cloistered, bound by vows or monastic observances, or even irrevocably consecrated to their manner of life, but the time was come when by the adoption of

these essential obligations, the Society, as St. Angela herself had called it, would receive its full development by being converted into a regular monastic Order. This alteration in the form, changed nothing in the substance of the Saint's original institution. Whether a member of a simple confraternity, or of a religious order in the restricted meaning of the word, the Ursuline was at all times equally bound to devote her life to the instruction of the young, and to work out her own sanctification by the practice of the evangelical counsels. The instrument of the great work in question was Madame St. Beuve, a pious and wealthy widow, who at the request of her relative, Madame Acarie, consented to accept the title and responsibilities of Foundress of the house at Paris, on the express understanding that it should in due time be formed into a monastery. In this object she finally succeeded to her entire satisfaction. The reigning Pontiff, Paul V., approved the design, and on the 16th of June, 1612, issued a Bull converting the Congregation into a Monastery, under the patronage of St. Ursula and the rule of St. Augustine. His Holiness, moreover, ordained that for the greater stability of the order, the religious should add to the three ordinary solemn vows, a fourth of the instruction of the young. The Bull of Pope Paul V. was confirmed in 1626 by Urban VIII. The convent in Paris, so interesting to Ursulines from its associations, "le grand couvent de St. Jacques," as it was called from its locality, was among those destroyed in the first Revolution, but, by an inscrutable permission of Divine Providence, it is not among those restored. Still, even in its

ruins, it not only lives in the hearts of Ursulines, but may be said actually to survive in its numerous foundations and their offshoots. Between its establishment in 1612, and the death of its venerated Foundress in 1630, eleven houses of the Congregation had sprung up in the north of France. Its subsequent diffusion was equally satisfactory.

Congregations of Ursulines were established at Bordeaux and Lyons, under the respective dates 1605 and 1611, and, within a few years after their foundation, were erected into Monastic Orders by Pope Paul V.; from these, numerous filiations have also sprung. There are other Congregations of Ursulines, but the three named are the most numerous. Although the spirit and the essential end of Ursulines are in all cases the same, the various Congregations differ more or less on certain points, and each retains the name which distinguishes it from the others.

Notwithstanding the suppression of numbers of its houses, the Order of St. Angela now registers about three hundred, the greater portion in Europe, some in Oceanica, and a large number in America. The history of the Mother of the Incarnation will shortly introduce us to the first in the New World. Of late years, the old tree seems to have renewed its vitality, so vigorously is it putting forth fresh branches. In Belgium alone, thirty houses have been founded by one priest in our own times; and although, unhappily, the work of suppression has been steady in Germany, the dispossessed communities have not perished, but only removed to other countries.

The increase of devotion to St. Angela keeps pace in our day with the extension of her Order. Pope Pius IX., of revered and cherished memory, gave a considerable impetus to this devotion, by raising the saint's festival to a higher ritual rank, permitting the universal celebration of her office, and proclaiming her the "Patroness of Christian mothers, and the Protectress of young girls." The establishment of the arch-confraternity which bears her name, has greatly contributed to the same end. It was commenced at Blois in 1863 by the Abbé Richaudeau, a zealous patron of the Order, and is widely spread wherever Ursulines are to be found. Its objects are the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the triumph of the Church, the deliverance of the suffering souls in purgatory, and the extension of the work of St. Angela by word and example, or the apostolate of woman. It is enriched with indulgences, and the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered on the first Tuesday of every month for the associates.

During the three and a half centuries of its existence, the Ursuline Order is calculated to have given to the Church more than one hundred thousand religious, by whom multitudes of young girls of every grade have been trained to piety. Only the angels have kept the record of the multitude of saints whom it has given to heaven, some bearing the palm branches of victorious martyrs, all clad in virgin robes, and swelling the celestial canticle which only the Spouses of the Lamb are privileged to sing.

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THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION.

SECOND PERIOD, 1631—1639.

HER RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

SISTER MARY OF THE INCARNATION, AN URSULINE NOVICE.—VIRTUES AND TRIALS OF HER NOVITIATE.—THIRD VISION OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.—HER CLOTHING.

MARIE GUYART was in her thirty-first year when she commenced her career as an Ursuline. Even without her own testimony, we could easily have understood, that after her long and severe probation in the world, the novitiate of religion must have appeared to her like a very heaven of peace. She compared her entrance into the sanctuary to the opening of the gate of a terrestrial paradise, and dwelt with holy joy on the happiness of having exchanged a life of embarrassment, responsibility, and care, for the blessed condition of a simple novice, whose only affair is to sanctify her soul by the observance of her rule.

It was not long before her superiors had an opportunity of testing her virtue, and satisfying themselves that it was genuine. She had been for years accustomed, as we have seen, to the severest rigours

of corporal mortification, but, having now embraced community life, in which singularities even in devotion are inadmissible, it had become necessary to restrict her penances to those in ordinary practice. To persons unacquainted with her spirit, the question may naturally have occurred, whether it would cost her much thus to alter the whole tenor of her external life, and submit unconditionally to the rule in the matter of austerities, as of all else. But those who knew her well could have predicted, that as attachment to her own will and judgment had never mingled, however slightly, with her penitential works, she would renounce them, in compliance with the Divine will, as readily as she had embraced them from the same motive—and so it was.

Knowing that the sacrifice of obedience is more acceptable to God than the sacrifice of victims, she at once submitted, not only without a remonstrance or a hesitation, but even without a thought or a feeling contrary to the will of her superiors, thus early establishing her religious perfection on the solid virtues of humility and obedience, its only secure foundation. A great love for common life became henceforth one of the marked characteristics of her spirit as a religious, and, except either by the actual direction, or with the immediate sanction of authority, she never to the end of life departed from its rules. In her later instructions, she remarks, that in good works of our own selection, there is generally a mingling of the human spirit, and, therefore, a proportionate deficiency of the Spirit of God, whereas in the observance of the established ordinances of religious life, there is no room for the intrusion of the human spirit, seeing that the will

is not free to choose between them, but must simply submit to each and all without distinction.

Although in every respect so superior to her sister novices, she took her place among them with a sweet, child-like simplicity that charmed and edified all who witnessed it. Forgetting her age, her talents, her experience, her profound knowledge of the spiritual life, and her extraordinary communications with God, she conversed with, and accommodated herself to the youngest sisters as if she had really been the least, and the most ignorant of them all. It was her delight to apply to them for information regarding the practices and ceremonies of religion; she was always pleased and grateful when they taught her something new, and ever ready to admit her ignorance and apologise for her mistakes. It was but natural that her mature years and her reputation for sanctity should have elicited a certain degree of deference from her youthful companions, but nothing confused her more than any external manifestation of the feeling. The more her sisters would have distinguished her, the more she tried to pass unnoticed in the crowd, and far from considering herself an example to the others, she was never tired of admiring their spirit of self-denial and exactitude to regular observance, which she looked on as a lesson to herself. She made it her especial study to carry out even the least direction public or private, of her mistress of novices, the perfection of the accompanying interior spirit elevating these trivial acts to the height of sublime virtue. While her external life exhibited in every feature a living model of that beautiful work of grace, a perfect novice, her heart was filled with so

deep a joy, that it almost seemed to her as if no trouble could reach her more; no storm ever break on the peaceful haven to which the hand of God had at last guided her. But it was not so; the cross was her portion, and even now, its shadow flung itself across the sunbeams.

It happened that after giving her up so bravely, her little son repented of his heroism, instigated to rebellion by various persons who persuaded him that he had done a very foolish thing in permitting his mother to become a nun, and that he ought to go boldly to the monastery, and demand her restoration, an advice which he was not slow to adopt. The new building being at that time in progress, his plan was much facilitated, for the doors were left open for the workmen, and thus he easily managed to enter the otherwise inaccessible inclosure, making his way, now to the choir, now to the refectory, now to the parlour grate, and everywhere announcing his presence by the plaintive cry, "Give me back my mother! Give me back my mother!" She tried to appease his childish grief by little presents given her for the purpose, but the tempest was allayed for the moment, only to burst out afresh with renewed vigour. Once a relative of hers wrote some pathetic verses on the desolate condition of the forsaken child, and gave them to him to present to his mother; she read them with exterior composure, but every word pierced her heart. His companions, who loved and pitied him, determined at last to take the law into their own hands. "It is because you have no mother," they said, "that you are deprived of the indulgences and gratifications which we enjoy, but come with us to the convent, and we shall make

such a terrible noise, that they will be forced to give you back yours. We shall insist on getting her, even if we have to break down the doors." Forthwith the self-constituted champions formed in battle array, and armed, some with sticks and some with stones, they proceeded to besiege the monastery, if not strictly according to the rules of war, at least with resolute hearts determined never to yield until the fortress had surrendered. Many of the spectators laughed as the belligerents passed along; many more looked grave and applauded the children's spirit. Great was the clamour when the little army reached the monastery, but the inmates were not left long in ignorance of the object of the invasion, for high above the din and uproar rose the familiar cry of a now well-known voice, "Give me back my mother!" For once, that much tried mother's courage almost faltered. Immovable in her own resolution to make her sacrifice to God at the expense of every feeling of nature, she feared that the forbearance of the sisters must be by this time exhausted, and that rather than submit to continual disturbance from her son, they would recommend her to return to the world, and resume the care of him, which she says would have been very reasonable on their part, but an inexpressible trial to her. We are not told by what arguments the doughty warriors were induced to abandon the siege; all we know is that the fortress surrendered neither itself nor its saintly inmate, whom our Lord Himself soon after consoled and fortified by an interior assurance that notwithstanding all obstacles, she would make her religious profession in this house.

Her troubles about the child were not yet, however, at an end. Before her entrance to the convent he had been remarkably good and docile, but now, so completely had his temper been soured by the irritating remarks of injudicious advisers, that he had grown idle, self-willed and absolutely reckless. This was the worst pang of all; she dreaded more than any other misfortune, that of his offending God; the news of his death would have been a light sorrow in comparison. To avert this greatest of evils, she offered herself as a victim to the Almighty, consenting to endure any suffering it might please Him to inflict, provided only her boy were preserved from sin. The contract was ratified in heaven, and it bore its fruits on earth; fruits of sorrow to the mother, of future sanctification to the son. Some time after, at the request of the Archbishop of Tours the Jesuits agreed to take charge of the child, and removed him to their College at Rennes. Those who had most severely censured his mother, now altered their opinion, and declared that in the step she had taken, she had but obeyed the voice of God.

About two months after her entrance to the novitiate, Marie Guyart was admitted to another of those supernatural communications, which the Almighty seemed to delight in imparting to her pure and humble soul. It was a third vision of the most adorable Trinity, differing from the two preceding in this, that while in the first, she had been illuminated as to the nature of the mystery and in the second, closely united in heart to the Word, in this, her soul was chosen as the abode and possession of the three Divine Persons, in highest

fulfilment of the promise of Christ, "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (St. John xiv. 23). It was the greatest favour she had yet received, as our Lord was pleased to signify to her. While it elevated her to new heights of love for a God of such infinite condescension, it lowered her, as did all similar graces to deeper depths of self-contempt and interior annihilation, with an increased desire to prove her love for her Divine Benefactor by suffering for Him ever more and more. A few days after this ecstasy, she received the holy habit, and with it, the now well-known and widely revered name of Mary of the Incarnation.

CHAPTER II.

INFUSED KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE.—INTERIOR SUFFERINGS.—RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.—NEW TRIALS FROM HER SON.

So great was the joy of the fervent novice at finding herself clad in the livery of her Divine Master, that she tells us she at first sometimes instinctively touched her veil to make sure that her happiness was no delusive dream. Proportioned to her gratitude, was her fidelity to her heavenly Spouse. The only change observable in her after she had received the habit, was a daily progress in the perfection of which she was destined to be so bright a model to religious persons. Her virtues she could not conceal, for they betrayed themselves by their own sweet

fragrance. Neither could her humility altogether hide certain supernatural privileges, granted her perhaps as much for the benefit and comfort of others, as for her own advantage. Among these were an infused knowledge of Holy Scripture, the capability of understanding it in Latin without previous study of the language, and a singular facility for speaking on spiritual subjects. So familiar was she with the Scripture, that its words of life seemed to occur to her quite naturally on all occasions. Whether her object was to lighten the burden of the suffering, or to brighten the joy of the happy, she was never at a loss for some appropriate sentence whereby to recall the thought of Him who is the only true Comforter of our sorrows, as well as the only unfailing Source of our bliss. It was in prayer, not by study, that she acquired her truly wonderful acquaintance with the Sacred Writings. In the fulness of the light imparted by the Divine Instructor, she was enabled to penetrate so far beyond the literal meaning, alone apparent to ordinary readers of the inspired words, that she sometimes feared lest the abundance of knowledge should lead to curious speculations of the understanding, and that her union with God in simplicity of soul, might in consequence be even slightly impeded,—but the dread of such a danger was necessarily a security against it. She had a very particular devotion to the Divine Office, and in her trials of interior desolation, sometimes found in the chanting of the Psalms, a relief and consolation which no other exercise could impart. Very truly might she have exclaimed with the Psalmist, "How sweet are Thy words to my palate!"

more than honey to my mouth. O how have I loved Thy law, O Lord!" (cxviii. 103, 97).

A sister novice once asked her to explain the passage of the Canticles, "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth," which she had happened to meet in her prayer-book. Their mistress was present, and to mortify her, as she declared, ordered her to take a chair and proceed. No sooner had she commenced, as desired, than her subject transported her as it were out of herself. A torrent of sacred eloquence flowed from her heart to her lips. She spoke with a fluency that amazed her hearers, and at the same time, with an unction that penetrated, and a charm that fascinated them. Suddenly she stopped, as if the remainder of the effusion were meant to be reserved for the ear of her Lord alone. Her sisters dared not interrupt the colloquy, which only the angels were privileged to hear.

But this ray from Thabor, served as usual but to light her back to her ordinary abiding place on Calvary. Again her soul was plunged into an apparently fathomless abyss of desolation, and inundated as by a deluge of temptations; temptations to despair and blasphemy; temptations to pride and vanity; temptations against faith, against charity, against obedience, and against the angelic virtue,—sometimes assailing her one by one, sometimes overwhelming her all at once. She was in constant apprehension of having consented to the enemy's most extravagant and most impious suggestions. The passing comfort which she derived from her director's counsels, was counteracted by the after dread of having deceived him. Even this, her only

sensible succour, was taken from her when she seemed to need it most, Dom Raymond of St. Bernard, who had helped her through so many difficulties, being appointed Superior of his Order, and obliged in consequence to change his residence. The spiritual guide into whose hands she next fell, increased her perplexities by assuring her that she had hitherto been ill-advised, and pronouncing her heavenly favours delusions. Finally, as the climax to her trials, she seemed to have lost trust in the superintendence of Providence, that strong anchor of the troubled soul. It was the most painful form in which despair had yet assailed her, and as an apparent encroachment on one of the attributes of God, the supreme Object of her love, it caused her intense affliction.

If she could but have bathed her soul in the dew of Divine consolation at prayer, how much it would have refreshed her! But she seemed to feel only a loathing for the things of God; meditation, in particular, had become her torture, for it appeared as if there especially, the torrent of temptation was let loose. Her understanding was obscured, her memory for spiritual things weakened, her imagination troubled, her heart sad. From the constant strain on her mind, and the unceasing struggle to do violence to nature, she contracted an habitual headache which added to the difficulty of her external duties, yet through all her multiplied troubles, she never lost either the view of God's presence, or her interior peace; she never formed a desire for the diminution of her crosses, nor ever omitted any observance of rule, and so admirable was her self-control, that only

the Mother Superior and her director were aware of her state of mental anguish. Her one only aim was to maintain her patience; to avoid every deliberate imperfection, and to conform to the will of God even without the sensible support of knowing that she did so. The terrible interior trial lasted for more than two years almost without intermission, and then the Divine Consoler of the afflicted came Himself to her aid. As she prayed before the Blessed Sacrament with entire abandonment of her will to the will of God, she seemed interiorly to hear the words, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps cxxv. 5). She had never before, she says, understood the whole import of those words, although in the daily habit of repeating them in choir, but now they struck her with their full force, revealing to her for the first time, hitherto hidden springs of encouragement and consolation.

The cross was not removed, it is true, but a great increase of esteem and love for it was imparted to her. Thus strengthened, she embraced it with her whole heart, satisfied to bear it to the last moment of existence, if thus she could at last attain the eternal joy to which those blessed words pointed, as to a star of hope illumining the close of life's long path of tears. The cross was not removed, but it was so far lightened by her love for it, that in her renewed courage she could say with heart, as with lips, "Thy yoke, O Lord, is sweet, and Thy burden light!" "I am not tired of suffering, my God! I am not tired of suffering!"

As the time for pronouncing her vows drew near, she fully expected that her sisters would reject her,

on account of her numerous imaginary disqualifications, but conscious only of possessing in her a treasure of virtue, and a precious gift from heaven, they gladly admitted her to holy Profession on the 25th of January, 1632 : she was then in the thirty-third year of her age. On the eve, her interior sufferings vanished as if by magic, giving place to indescribable raptures of Divine love and heavenly sweetness. After the ceremony, she retired to her cell to give vent unobserved to the ecstasies of her joy and gratitude, and there it was revealed to her, that henceforth she must incessantly fly in God's presence on the six wings of her three vows, and of the virtues of faith, hope and love. This respite from the cross is compared by one of the writers of her life, to the clearing of the sky between two storms ; it lasted but eight days, and then the tempest burst forth afresh and with redoubled violence. She might perhaps have doubted the reality of her vanished joy, had it not left a substantial trace in her renewed ardour for the cross, and her heightened aspiration after the perfection of utter detachment from self and every creature.

The sermons of the following Lent were preached in the cathedral of Tours by a Jesuit of great eminence, Father George de la Haye, with whose saintly and enlightened spirit the Ursulines were well acquainted, from his frequent exhortations to themselves. Full of compassion for the prolonged sufferings of Sister Mary of the Incarnation, the Mother Superior was inspired by her own charity to procure her an opportunity of conferring with this experienced director. Before forming a conclu-

sive judgment on her state, he required to see a written account of the graces she had received through life, and of the manner of her correspondence with them. The humble servant of God consented to prepare it, on condition that she should at the same time be allowed to write a confession of all her sins and imperfections. Such was the origin of the first account of her life by herself, so frequently referred to in these pages. After mature consideration of the document, and fervent prayer for the light of heaven, the Father assured her unhesitatingly that her method of prayer had been inspired by God, and that she had all along been guided by His Spirit alone, a decision which filled her soul with indescribable peace. Shortly afterwards, her interior trials were instantaneously and totally removed.

Summing up the advantages of these at a later period, she says that they are a source of self-knowledge and a stimulus to self-correction;—that in the abundance of spiritual consolation, the soul is carried on by an ardour which she mistakes for virtue, whereas, when the inferior part is deprived of all sensible succour, she discovers that she is full of human life and feeling, which she must begin at last in real earnest to mortify and crush. Viewing interior suffering in this light, she conceived so great a love for it, that if permitted to choose between spiritual enjoyment, and her multiplied most bitter crosses, she tells us she would have selected the cross.

Shortly before her Profession, she had the great grief of hearing that in consequence of her son's

recent insubordination, his removal from the college at Rennes had become inevitable. One of his aunts accordingly brought him back to Tours, where removed from the influence which had led him astray, he quickly reformed. To complete his mother's obligations to Father de la Haye, that good religious charged himself with the boy's future education, and with that object took him to Orleans, where under his own immediate direction the child continued his studies up to the class of rhetoric. This he was sent to follow at Tours in a Jesuit college lately founded, and then Father de la Haye recalled him once more to Orleans for the completion of his course of philosophy.

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION IS APPOINTED
ASSISTANT MISTRESS OF NOVICES—PROPHETIC
VISION OF HER VOCATION TO CANADA—SPIRITUAL
MAXIMS AND INSTRUCTIONS.

IN the second year after her profession, Mother Mary of the Incarnation was appointed assistant Mistress of novices, a striking proof of the high estimation in which she was held by her superiors. Much about the same time, she had the remarkable vision of her vocation for Canada, which she thus describes. "One night, after conversing familiarly with our Lord, as usual, before falling asleep, I seemed as in a dream to see a strange lady in a secular dress standing near me. Her presence sur-

prised me extremely, as I could not imagine how she had come to my room. Taking her by the hand, I led her from the house in great haste, through a very rugged, fatiguing road, without knowing in the least where it was that I wanted to conduct her, or of course the way to our destination. We advanced steadily through multiplied obstacles, until at last we came to an inclosed space, at the entrance of which stood a venerable looking man clothed in white, and resembling the ordinary representations of the Apostles. He was the guardian of the place, and motioned to us to enter, signifying by a gesture that we had no alternative but to pass through, this being the only road on our way. It was an enchanting spot ; the pavement appeared to be composed of squares of white marble or alabaster, united by richly coloured bands of brilliant red ; its only roof was the canopy of heaven ; its greatest ornament and charm the stillness which reigned around. To the left, at some distance, was a beautiful little white marble church, with a seat on the top occupied by the Blessed Virgin holding her Divine Infant. From the eminence on which we stood, we could see a vast region beneath, thickly interspersed with mountains and valleys, and covered with a heavy mist in every part except one, the site of a small church. The Mother of God was gazing fixedly at this desolate land to which there was access only through one rough narrow path ; she looked as immovable as the marble on which she was seated. I relinquished the hand of my companion to hasten to her, stretching out my arms eagerly towards her. Her back was to me, but I could see that as I approached, she bent to

her Divine Child, to whom, without speaking, she communicated something important. I felt as if she were directing his attention to this poor forsaken country and to me, and I longed to attract her notice. Then with ravishing grace, she turned to me, and sweetly smiling, embraced me in silence. A second and a third time, she repeated the same movements, filling my soul at each new embrace with an unction which no words can describe. She looked about sixteen years of age. I could never depict the enchanting beauty and sweetness of her countenance. My companion was standing at the distance of two or three steps, as if preparing to descend to the forlorn-looking land, and from where she stood, she had a side view of the Blessed Virgin. I awoke with an impression of extraordinary peace which lasted some days, but the vision was yet a mystery whose meaning I could not divine."

A grand work of zeal lay before the Mother, but until it should please God to reveal His future designs, her aim was to acquit herself perfectly of the duties assigned her by providence in the present moment. The most important of these was to form the novices to religious life by conferences on its spirit and its obligations, and at the same time to prepare them for the special function of the Ursuline institute, by instructions on the Christian doctrine. She had a natural facility for expressing her thoughts on every subject, but when spiritual things were her theme, she surpassed herself, her abundant and most appropriate quotations from Scripture adding immeasurably to the weight of her words. Her talent for writing on pious subjects equalled her facility for

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speaking of them. It was while second Mistress of novices, that she composed her catechism, one of the most complete works of its kind, combining with admirable dogmatic instructions, equally valuable practical lessons of conduct.

Habitually, the Mother of the Incarnation spoke little, and when obliged to break silence, never used many words. This habit which she had contracted in the world, she retained all her life, perfecting it more and more as she advanced in sanctity. Her words, though few in number, were comprehensive in meaning, as may be seen in the following specimens of the maxims which she most frequently inculcated.

"A soul," she said, "which would follow her call to the perfection of the spiritual life, must prepare first to pass gradually through spiritual death with all its varied and prolonged agonies. Those who have not endured the ordeal, can scarcely calculate the degree of interior crucifixion, or the amount of self-abandonment required."

"Many desire, and would gladly accept the gift of prayer, but few aim at, and labour for the spirit of humility and self-abnegation, without which there can be no true spirit of prayer or recollection. Devotion unsustained by mortification is of a doubtful character."

"Mortification and prayer cannot be separated. They have a close connection, and are a mutual support."

"The gift of prayer and fervent devotion is not for the great talker; it is impossible that the heart and lips should be uselessly occupied with creatures, and at the same time employed with God."

"Interior purity is an essential condition for Divine union. As the sea casts out corrupted matter, so God, the infinite Ocean of perfection, rejects souls dead in sin, uniting Himself only to those who live by grace and resemble Him in purity."

"There is no greater obstacle to the progress of the soul than curious speculations in prayer, and the desire to know more than God intends. We may exceed in the desire of knowledge, but never in the desire of love."

"The most sublime life is that which combines the external practice of the virtues of the Gospel, with interior familiarity with God."

"We make God our debtor, if I may say so, when we cast ourselves into His arms with child-like confidence. We should lose ourselves lovingly in Him, for although it is true that we are nothing, while He is all, we shall for that reason be more easily and more happily lost in Him."

"The Eternal Father has made known to a certain soul that whatever she asks of Him through the most Sacred Heart of His Son, He will grant her."

Every day we must begin anew to love God, persuaded that the day before we did not love Him truly; seeing only defects in the past, and work to do in the present and future."

"I cannot imagine," she would sometimes say, "how a soul can seek her pleasure in intercourse with creatures, when she can at all times converse with the ever-present Creator. I wonder," she remarked on other occasions, "how, having God for our Father, we are not always perfectly contented. The reason is that we are too much occupied about ourselves."

"Even to the end of life the holiest souls experience the assaults of corrupt nature, which furnish a constant occasion of interior humiliation."

"The practical experience of our weakness is the true teacher of contempt of self and compassion for others."

"The nearer the soul approaches to God, the more clearly she sees her nothingness."

"I cannot understand," she said, "how a religious soul who desires to love God and to be loved by Him, can fail in obedience or find a difficulty in it, knowing as she does that it is the certain means of fulfilling the will of God."

"There is no shorter road to the perfection of the interior life, than the universal retrenchment of all reflections, not only on annoying subjects, but even on such as do not lead to God and the practice of virtue."

"The effect of over-eagerness to finish one action, in order to hasten to another, is that both are done imperfectly."

"Our afflictions are not chance accidents, but graces from God, to detach us from creatures, and unite us to Himself."

"It seems strange that we rebel against trials, since everything that God sends is good and desirable."

"Resignation in suffering is a mark that the soul is near to God and His mercies."

"Peace reigns in the heart, which, through holy self-hatred, endeavours to destroy the very last vestiges of corrupt nature."

She had a hatred of all vices, but especially of

deceit, and was accustomed to say that "when the mouth opens to a falsehood, the heart closes to God."

Another of her sayings was, that her temptations had been to her useful practical lessons, teaching her how to govern others, by having taught her first to command herself. She often inculcated that "to suffer and pray is the only means by which, in the present life, we can honour the Church Triumphant, and help the Churches Militant and Suffering."

From these few examples we can form an idea at least of the solidity of her lessons, which she never intruded, always maintaining a strict reserve unless pressed to speak by charity or obedience. Not only the novices, but even many of the elder religious delighted in listening to her spiritual instructions. Among other matters, she explained the Psalms and the Canticle of Canticles in a style at once so sublime and so clear, that both beginners and proficients derived profit from her words. Among the numerous novices formed to the interior life by her example and counsels, some became eminent for holiness. As her son remarks, the beauty of the copies is the highest tribute to the perfection of the original, and the solid virtue of the disciples, the best proof of the excellence of the teacher.

CHAPTER IV.

INCREASED ZEAL OF THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATION.—REVELATION OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, AND OF HER CALL TO THE CANADIAN MISSION.

FROM her first years, zeal for the salvation of souls had been a special characteristic of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation. Her early delight had been, as we know, to travel in spirit over infidel lands with the holy missionaries, and unite in heart and intention with their labours. Now that the dream of her childhood was about to become a grand reality, the holy fire acquired a ten-fold vehemence, as if her Divine Master would thus predispose her for the revelation of His designs. She seemed actually to burn with desire that the only Object of her love should be known and adored by every creature, and, unable to endure the thought of the triumph of Satan over Jesus, she gathered the poor perishing souls of all unbelievers into her heart, and, presenting them to the Eternal Father, reminded Him that He had promised the dominion of the nations to His Son, who ought no longer to be deprived of the inheritance purchased at the dear price of His own most precious blood. "The zeal of God's house absolutely consuming her" (Ps. lxviii. 101), she continued to traverse heathen lands in spirit, praying for a voice strong enough to proclaim to the extremity of the earth that her heavenly Spouse is worthy of the love and homage of every human heart. The worst torments of the martyrs would have seemed light to her if by them she could have

gained these straying souls to her Lord. She besought God to inflict on her the last excess of pain, and that until the Day of Judgment, if thus she could extend the Kingdom of Christ. She might literally have said with the Psalmist, "My zeal hath made me pine away" (Ps. cxviii. 139), for, the inflamed ardour of her soul reacting on her bodily strength, she was reduced to such great exhaustion, that it was feared she would have died. Still the prayer seemed unheeded, though still it went on redoubling in earnestness, until at last the Eternal Father made known to her that if she would obtain her petition, she must present it through the Heart of His Divine Son. Thus was the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus made known to the Mother Mary of the Incarnation long before it was revealed to the world through another of its fervent clients. All through her remaining life, she cherished a most ardent devotion to that ever-adorable Heart. She offered nothing to God, she asked nothing of Him, except through it. She made it her refuge in difficulty and her consolation in suffering; her repose in weariness, her treasure in poverty, her all, for love of which she despised herself and renounced all things created.

At the time of her vision, her director had remarked that the country shown her might perhaps have been Canada, which was then exciting some attention. It was a new light; she had never before heard of Canada; neither had she for a moment imagined that God intended her to labour for souls otherwise than by the interior practices of zeal and charity to which she was accustomed. All

doubt was removed when, in a repetition of the vision, God revealed to her that it was indeed Canada which she had seen, distinctly telling her at the same time that she was the instrument chosen to build a house there for Jesus and Mary. Now, at last, she knew her destiny. "Oh, my great God!" she exclaimed, "Thou art omnipotent, and I am all weakness; if Thou wilt assist me I am ready. Do in me and by me Thy most adorable will."

In every phase of her vocation to Canada, we are struck by the visible intervention of the wonder-working, ever-watchful Providence of God. Thus it happened that at this very crisis, she received for the first time a "Report" of the affairs of the Church in the infant colony. It was the one for 1635, the year, following the regular establishment of the Huron Mission, and was sent her by Father Poncet, a Jesuit. Without having the least idea that their destinations were similar, he informed her of his own vocation for that mission, sent her a miniature pilgrim's staff which he had brought from Loretto, and invited her to join the great work. As she knew that the good Father was absolutely ignorant of her spiritual state, the whole affair greatly surprised her. How would her wonder have increased had she been aware that the same Report of 1635 was to be the means under God of deciding another vocation, on which hung the success of the Ursuline Mission to Canada! She could answer the Father's invitation only in general terms, unwilling, on the one hand, to speak of the supernatural revelation granted her, and ignorant, on the other, of the means by which the Almighty intended to execute His will in

her regard. The enterprise was one demanding not only superhuman courage, but also pecuniary resources; in proportion as the Mother of the Incarnation abounded in the one, so was she destitute of the other, but her future was in the hands of Him to whom it is as easy to dispense the treasures of earth, as the riches of heaven. While she tranquilly abandoned herself as a passive instrument to His designs, His Almighty Providence was employed in preparing for her a co-operatrix endowed at once with the zeal and the wealth, each indispensable in its way,—Madame de la Peltrie, to whom the next chapter will introduce us.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME DE LA PELTRIE, FOUNDRESS OF THE URSULINES IN CANADA.

MARIE MADELEINE DE CHAUVIGNY, better known as Madame de la Peltrie, was born in 1603, at Alençon, a town in Normandy. Through both her parents she claimed connection with the noblest families of the province, and from both also she derived a far more precious inheritance than exalted birth, the imperishable heritage of piety. The virtues which reflected so bright a lustre on her name, both in her own land and in the New World, were, under God, the fruit of their teaching; but it must be owned that her natural docility and amiability of disposition rendered her early training an easy task. Compassion for the poor seemed so identified with her nature, that she could not see a want without

trying, according to her opportunity, to relieve it, and when the power to do this failed, she endeavoured to make up for the disappointment by an ever-ready and most tender sympathy. She seemed to have no taste for the toys and sports of children, preferring for her recreation the exercises of devotion, which she had learned by observing them in others. In admiration of her early piety, her parents loved to fancy that heaven must surely have some singularly blessed destiny in store for her.

Under her mother's guidance, she received an education suitable to her high social position and brilliant prospects, and when she had attained her seventeenth year, she was informed that being of course intended for married life, she would do well to accept a very excellent proposal which had just offered. Most cordially despising the world with its pomps and vanities, and desiring with her whole heart to have no spouse but a Heavenly One, she was utterly overcome by the announcement. She had never had a thought but of consecrating herself to God in religion, and had refrained from speaking of her intentions merely because she believed that the favourable time for doing so had not yet arrived. In the present unexpected disappointment of her dearest hopes, she fancied that if she were but once secure within the walls of a convent, her parents might not, perhaps, carry their authority so far as to oblige her to leave it; accordingly she went in all haste to a neighbouring abbey and asked admittance for a few days to make a retreat. This step exceedingly irritated her father, who at once insisted on her return home, and, as no persuasion could induce him

to alter his determination respecting her future destiny, her spiritual guides finally decided that the will of God in her regard was manifested by that of her parents, and that no alternative remained but to submit. After much prayer for the light of heaven, she consented to espouse the husband of their selection.

Monsieur de la Peltre, her partner, was in every respect worthy of her, and their union was one of such unbroken peace, that he often expressed a hope of living long, in order to benefit by her holy influence, and to enjoy the Christian happiness of which she was to him the ministering angel. But God had decreed otherwise; five years after their marriage he died in the very vigour of manhood. Their only child had passed at once from earth to heaven.

Her worldly ties thus broken at the early age of twenty-two, the young widow deliberated how she could most profitably dispose of herself and her possessions for the glory of God. A hundred and a hundred times a day she repeated, "Do with me, O Lord! as it shall please Thee; my heart, my life, my riches, all are Thine!" She had not lost her first inclination for the religious life, but the doubt arose whether, with her great wealth, she might not, perhaps, promote the Divine honour more effectually in the world than in a life of voluntary poverty. An ardent zeal for the salvation of souls lighted up her heart, and, like the Mother of the Incarnation, she flew in thought to the homes of the heathens, there to aid, at least by her prayers and desires, the labours of the missionaries. She panted to lend active

succour to the work, but could not yet see how this was to be brought about. Meantime the Providence of God was working out her destiny in its own sweet and wondrous way. After years of incertitude and indecision, she accidentally met with one of the Reports of the progress of the Canadian Mission. It was a copy of the same which had been sent to the Mother of the Incarnation by Father Poncet, bearing, as may be remembered, the date 1635. In burning accents of holy zeal, the writer asked whether no Christian heroine could be found willing to co-operate with the designs of Jesus by devoting herself to teach the Indian children the name of their unknown God, and the value of the precious blood which had redeemed them. The stirring appeal was an instantaneous answer to the doubts of years; it revealed her vocation as plainly as if an angel's voice had spoken. In a moment she saw that God destined her for the Canadian Mission, and with equal promptitude she resolved to obey the call. Soon after this first inspiration, God was pleased to confirm her resolution, by distinctly revealing to her that it was His will she should go to Canada, and there labour for the conversion of the Indian girls, promising that He would bestow great graces on her in recompense. "O Lord!" she exclaimed, "surely favours like these are not for a worthless, sinful creature such as I." And our Lord answered, "You speak truly; but the more unworthy the object of My favours, the more is My liberality exalted in bestowing them. I desire to employ you as the instrument of My mercies to Canada, and, notwithstanding all obstacles, you will

go there, and there, too, you will end your days." Unmistakably as the project appeared to be marked with the will of God, she would take no measures for its execution until competent judges had examined it in all its bearings, pronounced it the work of the Holy Spirit, and decided that she ought to carry it out without delay. Her vocation received its final confirmation in a dangerous illness which brought her to the very verge of the tomb. When the last hope had vanished, and her soul seemed on the very point of hearing the great summons to eternity, she felt inspired to vow that if her life were spared, she would build a church in Canada in honour of St. Joseph, and devote herself and her wealth, under his patronage, to the service of young Indian females. No sooner had she made the promise than she fell into a sweet refreshing sleep, from which she awoke in restored health. The amazement of the physicians was something wonderful. "What has become of your illness, Madam?" they asked. "It seems to have gone to Canada." Greatly surprised at the remark, she smilingly answered, "Yes, sir, as you say, it is gone to Canada."

Thus miraculously snatched from the arms of death, she thought only of fulfilling her vow as quickly as possible, but nearly four years were to pass before she could realize her pious wishes. As might have been expected, the enemy of all good set every engine at work to frustrate the design. Her father insisted that she should marry again, and after exhausting arguments and entreaties, he had recourse to threats, declaring that he would disinherit her if she persevered in opposing his wishes, and that if

she persisted in going to Canada, it would cost him his life. As time passed, obstacles seemed only to multiply, and her perplexity in consequence to increase, but before matters had finally come to a crisis, it pleased God to call her father out of life after a severe but short illness. This event, in removing one difficulty, created another. Some of her relatives who had long had designs on her property, eagerly seized the opportunity of securing the prize. With this object, they declared her incompetent to manage her own affairs, in consequence of her extravagance, as they termed her liberality to the poor and to the Church. They had recourse to law proceedings to prove the statement, and actually managed to procure a verdict in their favour. Just when her case seemed hopeless, she was extricated from the difficulty by following the advice of a kind friend, Monsieur de Bernières. At his suggestion she appealed to the Parliament of Rouen, and obtained a reversal of the first decision, with a full recognition of her rights. This great victory she attributed to the intercession of St. Joseph, in whose hands she had placed her cause, at the same time renewing her vow to build a church in Canada under his invocation, and devote her remaining life to the service of the Indians.

Her affairs no longer requiring her presence at home, she proceeded to Paris to complete her preparations for the voyage. She profited of the opportunity to submit her plans to two of the great lights of the age, Père Condren, General of the Oratorians, and St. Vincent of Paul, who both consoled her by the assurance that her vocation was

genuine, and her work the work of God. Even here her relatives continued to disquiet her. Unwilling to relinquish their prey, some of them actually followed her to the capital with the intention of seizing her person, and so closely did they watch her movements, that to baffle pursuit, she had to disguise herself in the dress of her maid when obliged to go out on business. Once more she had recourse to Monsieur de Bernières, and at his appearance, the conspirators dispersed.

This good friend of Madame de la Peltrie and the Ursulines, was the scion of an illustrious house in Normandy, and resided at Caen where he occupied a high official position. Fearing that the distraction of worldly business might divert his attention from the one thing necessary, he had early assembled around him a little community of ecclesiastics and pious laymen, who, united by the bonds of faith, charity, and prayer, served as mutual helps in the pursuit of a common end—Christian perfection. This association, called “The Hermitage,” once numbered among its members Monseigneur de Laval, the first Bishop of Canada. A faithful picture of the angelic soul of Monsieur de Bernières can be found in his own work entitled “The Interior Christian,” which is in fact the history of his inner life written by the direction of his confessor. His ardent zeal for the Divine honour inspired him with the liveliest interest in the Canadian mission, to which he continued until death a devoted and efficient friend. To Madame de la Peltrie in particular, he proved himself an invaluable assistant just at the time when she most needed counsel and

support. Her contradictions were not yet at an end; one indeed seemed removed only to make way for another. So it ever is with the work of God, for the sign by which that work conquers is the sign of the cross. It was now the month of November, 1638. On applying for a passage to Canada for the following spring, she was told that all the vessels for the ensuing season would be fully freighted, so that no alternative remained but to defer her departure for another year. Nothing daunted, she declared that if necessary, she would charter a vessel at her own expense, and when the time of departure came, so she actually did

CHAPTER VI.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATION'S VOCATION FOR CANADA.

WHILE the Almighty was thus slowly preparing the way for the accomplishment of his desigs, the Mother Mary of the Incarnation was still calmly awaiting the manifestation of His will, in utter unconsciousness of the progress of events. At the date to which we have brought the history of Madame de la Peltre, more than two years had passed since she and the Venerable Mother almost simultaneously learned by Divine revelation, that the Canadian mission was to be the scene of their future labours. Having followed the progress of the destined Foundress' vocation during those years, we shall now retrace our steps to consider the development of the Venerable Mother's in the same interval.

The great work in prospect was to be the work of God alone, and nothing of the creature was to be permitted to mingle with it, therefore, before the time for carrying it into effect arrived, the Almighty signified to his faithful servant, that even in the execution of the command which He had himself imposed, her own will was to have no share. As once He had assumed the dominion of her heart, He on this occasion assumed the dominion of her will,—the heart of the soul,—not depriving her of the faculty, but uniting it so closely to His own will, that hers became absolutely absorbed and lost in His. It was, she says, as if while she endeavoured to bend His will to hers, by her ardent prayers for the extension of the Kingdom of His Son, He on the contrary triumphed over hers so completely, that now she could will only as He willed. Thenceforth, she waited in silence and peace for the further manifestation of His designs, and deeply as she prized her vocation, she constantly prayed that if He willed her to work for Him in another sphere and another way, He would raise insuperable obstacles to her ever going to Canada. The secret of her future destiny she buried in her heart, until at the end of a year, the Almighty Himself commanded her to divulge it. When she did so, the communication entailed on her only mortification and humiliation. Her director rebuked her for indulging silly fancies ; the Mother Superior asserted that if God granted her request, it would be only as a punishment for her presumption ; others, whose judgment she equally deferred to, pronounced the project visionary and delusive, yet her great courage never failed, for it was founded on a perfect confidence that in His own

time, God would do His own work, using her as his instrument, all unworthy though she was. In two letters, she fully explained her position to her former spiritual guide, Dom Raymond of St. Bernard, who like herself, aspired at this time to the Canadian mission, though as the event proved, unsuccessfully. In one of these, she says, "God is stronger than man; He commands the winds and calms the waves. If He will have us in New France, He will surely conduct us thither in defiance of all the obstacles which look like mountains in human eyes, but before Him are only as straws and spiders' webs. When I consider my great misery, I cannot help feeling that it may in the end divert His choice to some worthier instrument, but if such should be His will, I bless Him in anticipation for the selection; whatever it may be, coming from Him, it must necessarily be all-wise." The humility, the trust in God, the total absence of all attachment to her own will and judgment which marked her communications, convinced this enlightened director that her vocation was genuine, and he therefore promised to promote its success to the best of his power. As God had decreed that she should concur in the great enterprise by something more than mere passive acquiescence, He again inspired and even urged her to repeat the information which by His order she had already given on the subject to her Superiors. This time she addressed herself to Father de la Haye, who approved of the undertaking, encouraged her to pursue it, and expressed a hope that the time of its accomplishment was near at hand. An important link was added to the chain of Providence by the communi-

cation just referred to. Father de la Haye confided it to Father Poncet, who was a good deal concerned in the affairs of the Canadian mission, and thus was the Mother's cause placed in the direct road of success. Some time more was, however, to pass, before the mysterious chain of Providence should be perfected.

Although careful to avoid unnecessary allusion to her own especial vocation, she spoke in such glowing terms of the happiness of labouring for the salvation of the infidels, that she effectually communicated her apostolic spirit to her community, who all joined her in prayer and works of penance for the conversion of heathen nations. The reputation of her zeal had even reached New France, whence she received urgent petitions from the missionaries to hasten to the aid of their dear converts. These appeals, some of them traced on bark by saintly men who soon were to water with their blood, the land blessed by their labours, she kissed reverentially and bedewed with her tears.

All her letters from Canada were not, however, of this description. Soon after the revelation of her vocation, she received two from Father le Jeune, mortifying enough to have discouraged any soul less humble than hers. As Superior of the missions in New France, he thought it advisable to try her spirit before she was permitted to follow her call; accordingly, he twice addressed her in the most humbling terms, dwelling particularly on her intolerable presumption in aspiring to functions far above her capacity, and aiming at a position in every way beyond her sphere. She read and re-read the

painful words with singular satisfaction, and in showing them to her director, she merely said, "Is he not a good Father to treat me so? If I ever fall under his authority, I am sure of finding a true friend in him." When she learned later that he was using his best efforts to procure nuns for Canada, and that he especially desired to secure her services, she understood even better than before, that sharp as were the arrows, they had indeed been guided by a friendly hand.

Lest self-love or natural ardour should imperceptibly mingle with her desire for the Canadian mission, she represented to herself its most alarming features,—the danger of perishing of cold or hunger; the chance of being led into captivity and perhaps cruelly tortured by the savages; the immeasurable privations, the hardships, disappointments and varied sufferings which without any doubt would be her daily portion, yet the terrible anticipation rather strengthened than diminished her love for her great vocation. "No creature," she said in a letter to her confessor, "could be worthy of one so exalted. It is so grand, so sublime, so glorious, that only God's gratuitous goodness could inspire Him to bestow it. Gladly," she continued, "would I purchase it at the price of a thousand lives if that were possible. Reflecting that 'Christ died for all' (2 Cor. v. 15), I grieve to think that all do not yet live for Him, and although confounded at my own presumption, I feel pressed by the desire to bring unbelievers to the knowledge and love of Him who is the true Life."

She continued to pray that she might be enabled at last to execute the command imposed on her of

building a house in Canada for Jesus and Mary, adding a petition that it might be also in honour of St. Joseph, whom she firmly believed to be the guardian of that country shown her in the vision. There seemed, however, little present prospect of her accomplishing her task, for, independently of other obstacles, more than one promise of the necessary pecuniary aid had ended in disappointment. Nothing then remained but to submit to the arrangements of Divine Providence, and this she did so perfectly, that it was difficult to decide whether most to admire her readiness to go to Canada, or her equal willingness to give up the idea. "An enterprise undertaken for God, should be renounced for God," she said, "when He withholds the means of carrying it into execution." But the thought of Canada continued to be as usual ever present to her heart, and although there seemed no human likelihood of her going there, she could not divest herself of a strong presentiment that the time of departure was approaching.

CHAPTER VII.

MADAME DE LA PELTRIE AT TOURS.—SELECTION OF
THE MISSIONERS.—DEPARTURE FOR PARIS.—
THENCE FOR DIEPPE.

WE left Madame de la Peltrie in Paris, preparing for her departure. All her arrangements were made at last, except one, but that was all-important. The projected work could not go on without the help of religious Sisters, and none had been engaged; where were they to be sought? Many voices were raised

in favour of the Ursulines of Paris, but God had chosen His own instrument, and in His own way He would manifest the selection. Father Poncet was known to be closely connected with the affairs of the mission, so he was appealed to for advice. His answer was prompt and satisfactory. "The Mother of the Incarnation had a marked vocation for New France; she possessed all needful qualifications, would fly to the ends of earth at the call of God, was to be found at the Ursuline Convent of at Tours." Following up the welcome hint, Madame de la Peltre wrote at once to the Mother Superior of that monastery to secure the co-operation of so invaluable an assistant, and the letter was accompanied by one from Father Poncet. It is easy to imagine the effect of these letters on the two persons most concerned. Recognising in them the almost visible trace of the hand of Providence, the Mother Superior could only bow down and adore: equally lost in admiration of the wondrous ways of God, the Mother of the Incarnation could but exclaim, "Lord, here I am; send me!"

Thinking herself called on to second this manifest intervention of Providence, the Mother resolved to communicate personally to Madame de la Peltre her wishes and sentiments on the subject of the mission. This letter gives so beautiful an insight to her mind that a few sentences from it will probably be read with interest and pleasure:—

"Can it be true, Madam," she asks, "that our Divine Master really calls you to the terrestrial paradise of New France? Are you, indeed, happily chosen to spread in that far-off region the heavenly

flame of His love ? Icicles abound there, it is true ; brambles and thorns grow in profusion ; but the fire of His Holy Spirit can dissolve the one and consume the other. His almighty power can strengthen weak creatures to endure all trials, and sacrifice all enjoyments for the salvation of God's children. O favoured spouse of Jesus ! yours is the blessed certainty that you love Him truly, since you are about to give the strongest proof of love by renouncing self and all things for His dear sake.

Since in His infinite goodness He has granted me sentiments like your own, I feel that our hearts are now one in the Heart of Jesus, and that, so united, they embrace all the heathen children of Canada, whom, as we hope, it will soon be our privilege to impress with the love of their infinitely amiable God. Some years have passed since our Lord inspired me with the desire of labouring for their salvation. Hitherto I could only tranquilly wait until it should please His Providence to summon me to my work ; now it seems as if the welcome call had come at last through you. Will you, then, accept me as the companion of your voyage and a co-operatrix in your future labours ? As I could explain myself more fully and satisfactorily in a personal interview, I venture to promise that if you can give me the opportunity, our Lord will indemnify you Himself for the fatigue of the journey. You will meet here many affectionate sisters ready to welcome you as a messenger from heaven, and I, although the most unworthy of all, presume to ask a share in your prayers." This letter, so full of the spirit of God, confirmed Madame de la Peltrie's first favourable

impression of the writer, and strengthened her desire to secure her as the foundation stone of her projected edifice.

The interview so humbly requested was cordially granted. Accompanied by Monsieur de Bernières, the Angel Raphael of her travels, Madame de la Peltrie arrived at the Convent of Tours on the 19th of February, 1639, having previously communicated the object of her visit to the Archbishop, and received his unqualified sanction. She was met by the whole community and conducted with due ceremonial to the choir, where the *Veni Creator* and the *Te Deum* were chanted. At first sight, the Mother Mary of the Incarnation recognised in Madame de la Peltrie the well-remembered features of the lady who had been represented in her vision as her companion to the unknown land, and their hearts were drawn towards each other irresistibly and for ever. The prayer of the Forty Hours was offered to obtain the direction of Heaven in the choice of the missionaries, and on its conclusion, the selection commenced. The will of God had been so clearly marked in regard of the Mother of the Incarnation, that much deliberation would, in her case, have been superfluous. The Mother Superior must have felt that in acceding to the request of Madame de la Peltrie by granting her this rich treasure, she was but concurring in a Divine appointment, which she was not at liberty to oppose. The sanction of human authority was now formally attached to the Venerable Mother's call to Canada, in addition to the stamp of heavenly revelation which it had so long borne, so she was free at last to enter on the course which stretched before her,

clear, direct and well-defined, and while her soul magnified the Lord, and her spirit exulted in God, her generous heart breathed the one aspiration, that she might prove her gratitude for His mercies by pursuing that blessed course even to its final term, with a love that would never cool and a fidelity that would never tire.

As it was understood that one Sister was to accompany the Mother of the Incarnation, many were the candidates who volunteered their services; it was remarkable, however, that the one whom God had chosen was the only one who kept aloof. Sister St. Bernard was full of holy ardour for the salvation of souls, especially the Indians—an ardour fanned by the perusal of the yearly Reports of the progress of the faith in Canada—but her humility persuading her that youth and other disqualifications unfitted her for the great work, she dared not present herself to Madame de la Peltrie. She would not even enter her apartment with the others, but hovered about outside, offering herself to God as a perpetual holocaust for the conversion of the savages, and promising St. Joseph that if he obtained for her the favour of joining the missionaries, she would change her present name for his, as a mark of her undying gratitude. Her private petition to the Mother Superior to be sent on the Mission had been rejected; the Mother Mary of the Incarnation, Madame de la Peltrie, and Monsieur de Bernières had all begged for her, and been likewise refused. Yet, when the community assembled to decide the question, it was singular that some difficulty or objection arose about every candidate except herself. This circumstance

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appearing to the Mother Superior an indication of the will of God, she feared to persist in her first intention, much as she regretted the loss of a subject whom she looked on as a future pillar of the house. Sister St. Bernard's parents threatened opposition, but He who holds in His hands the hearts of men, soon changed theirs so completely, that they gave her not only the desired permission, but their full approval and cordial benediction. Full of joy and gratitude, she changed her name as she had promised, and henceforth we know her as Mother St. Joseph. In the world she had been called Marie de la Troche, and her family was one of the highest in Anjou.

The aged Archbishop at once ratified the selection of the community, and warmly blessed the two candidates for the Mission, or, as he called them, the two foundation stones of the temple about to be erected in the New World for the glory of God. He prayed that the monastery at Quebec might be a home of grace, peace and benediction ; that the efforts of hell might never prevail against it ; and that the Lord might dwell there as the Father and Spouse not only of these its first inmates, but of all who should join or succeed them to the end of ages. He then appointed the Mother of the Incarnation Superior.

When all the preliminaries seemed satisfactorily concluded, it was found that an intimate friend of Madame de la Peltre's had, at the last moment, revoked a promise to accompany her, alarmed, it would seem, at the perils of the voyage and the anticipated hardships of life in Canada. The circum-

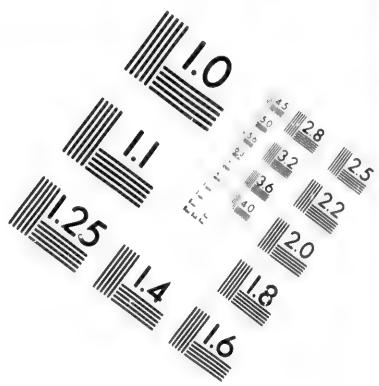
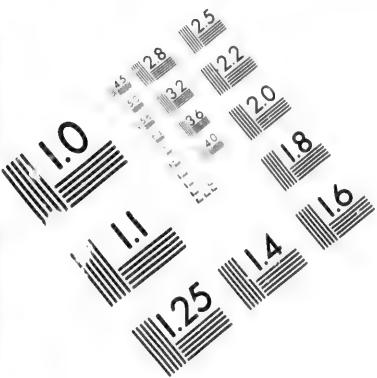
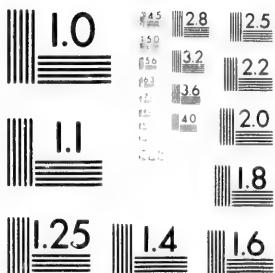
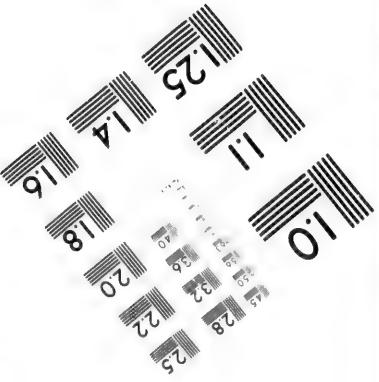
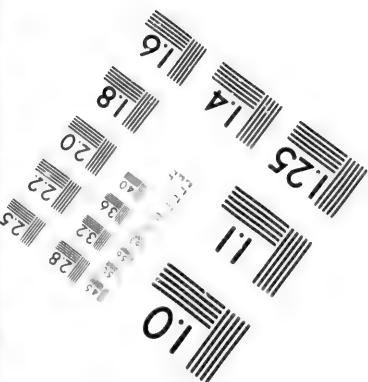


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stance was embarrassing, as little time now remained to seek a substitute, but the difficulty was removed in a manner as satisfactory as it was unexpected. There was just then in Tours a young person of respectable position and great piety, who, for the previous six years, had been determined on consecrating herself to the service of God and her neighbour in religion, but had deferred the execution of her design, merely because uncertain as to the particular Order she was destined for. By the arrangement of Providence, her confessor, a Jesuit, happened likewise to be at Tours precisely at the moment of the nuns' perplexity, and, hearing of it, he suggested to them that the lady in question would very probably answer their purpose. She was at once presented to the missionaries, and, on being asked by Madame de la Peltre, whether she would consent to go to Canada as her personal companion, she promptly replied that her intention had been to become a nun, but that, since the Almighty was pleased to offer her so glorious an opportunity of sacrificing her life for Him, she would accept it with joy and gratitude. Her family name of Charlotte Barré she exchanged later for that of Mother St. Ignatius, under which we know her as the first sister professed at the Ursuline Convent of Quebec.

Another attempt was still to be made by the enemy of souls to frustrate the design of the Mother of the Incarnation, and her natural affections were again the arms which he tried to turn against her. Intensely grieved at the news of her intended departure, her sister employed every imaginable argument to prevent it, and, finding all else fail, appealed once

more to her love for her son. She declared that if his mother forsook him, so would every one else, beginning with herself. Threats producing no impression, she went to the length of actually revoking the small pension which she had agreed to settle on the boy, as a kind of compensation to his mother for her services. But all was in vain: nothing could shake her courageous soul. One last effort remained: it was to apprise Claude Martin of his mother's intention, and inform him at the same time, that she was to pass through Orleans, where he was then studying, so that if he pleased he could have an opportunity of seeing her and working on her feelings. The hint was not lost on him, as we shall presently see.

On the 22nd of February, 1639, Mother Mary of the Incarnation bade a last farewell to the convent at Tours. It is easy to picture the grief of the Sisters at losing the beloved Mother whose example had been to all a perpetual stimulus to perfection, and whose counsels had encouraged so many to tread bravely the narrow path that leads to sanctity. The regret of the pupils for their saintly teacher, was the highest tribute to the gentleness and charity which had so greatly endeared her to them. As to herself, she seems all through to have had a presentiment that she was in the monastery only as a deposit, to be one day reclaimed by the Heavenly Master. Her only ties were those which bound her to Himself; when, therefore, He demanded His own, her disengaged soul was free to hasten on the wings of love, even to the farthest boundaries of the globe.

Before her departure, she had a vision in which

the church of her adopted country was represented to her as formed, not of stones, like ordinary buildings, but of human beings, fastened each to a cross. She was shown her destined place among the crucified, and made to understand the weight of her especial cross. She saw, not only in general, but in detail, all the afflictions that awaited her;—the agonies of interior desolation, the bitterness of external trials—all were vividly depicted; and it was intimated to her that henceforth she must serve the Lord at her own cost, and prove her gratitude for great favours, by great generosity in self-sacrifice. It was not long before she entered on the dolorous way which was to be henceforward her path here below. Faithful to his aunt's directions, her son watched for her arrival in Orleans, and at once presented himself before her. Feigning ignorance of her project, he inquired with well-assumed surprise, where she could possibly be travelling.

“To Paris,” she replied.

“But are you not going farther?” he continued.

“Probably to Normandy,” she said.

Seeing that she tried to avoid an explanation, he produced his aunt's letter, with the enclosed deed revoking his pension. She read the letter, every word of which must have been a torture, picturing as it did in glowing colours the isolation, the neglect, the actual destitution which awaited her boy, and raising her eyes to heaven, she exclaimed, “Oh! how many artifices Satan uses to oppose the designs of God!” Then, with the mingled tenderness of a mother and heroism of a saint, she asked, “My son, during the eight years which have elapsed since I

left you to consecrate myself to God, have you wanted anything?"

"No, mother," he replied.

"Well, then," she said, "the past ought to be to you a security for the future. Prove yourself the worthy child of God, the best of Fathers; keep His commandments, trust in His Providence, and you will find that He never disappoints those who fear Him. If I bid you adieu for the second time, it is again to obey His voice. If you really love me, you will rejoice that I have been chosen to labour for His honour among the infidels." She continued for some time thus to speak to him in the language of faith and love. As she raised his thoughts to heaven, his better feelings prevailed, and when she concluded, he knelt at her feet in tears and asked her blessing. He arose quite changed, burned the exciting letters, and, in the simplicity of his heart, offered to God the sacrifice of that holy mother whose loss he understood better now than at their first separation. That sacrifice was to him the source of immense graces and a fruitful seed of future sanctification.

Five days after leaving Tours, the missionaries arrived in Paris, and were at first lodged near the house of the professed Jesuits, whence they afterwards removed to the Ursuline house of St. Jacques, where, as the Venerable Mother remarks, "they found themselves once more in their element." To their great joy, they succeeded in obtaining permission for one of the religious of this monastery to accompany them to Canada, but their satisfaction was of short duration, for the Archbishop soon recalled the permission, and could not be induced to renew it.

A still more severe disappointment awaited the Mother of the Incarnation before her departure. Her son, the object of so much solicitude, the cause of so much sorrow, had just gladdened her heart by most unexpectedly expressing a desire to become a Jesuit. To leave him in the novitiate of a religious house, cut off from the troubles and temptations of the world, and with nothing to divert him from the concerns of his salvation, would have been the very crown and climax of her happiness—but the way of the cross was to be hers. The Father appointed to examine the young candidate thought him disqualified for religion; anxious, however, to soften the pain of an absolute refusal, he suggested that there might be a better chance at a future period, when the novitiate was less crowded. An over-ruling Providence had destined the youth for another Order, and when God's time came, the disqualifications complained of had disappeared; the present trial was, however, none the less painful to his mother.

Before leaving Paris, the missionaries had the honour of two interviews with the Queen, Anne of Austria, who then expressed and ever after manifested the liveliest interest in their great work. At Dieppe, the port of embarkation, they were lovingly received by their Ursuline sisters, who granted them not only hospitality, but the richer gift of one of their own religious, Mother Cecilia of the Cross. And now the hour of departure had come. Their indefatigable benefactor, Monsieur de Bernières, who had never lost sight of them, continued to the last moment to watch over their interests. His zeal would have prompted him to accompany them to Canada, but it

was thought he could assist them more effectually by remaining in France to look after Madame de la Peltrie's property. After their departure, he returned to Caen, where he resumed his ordinary life of prayer, retirement, and good works. He carefully managed Madame de la Peltrie's estate of Haravilliers, collected the rents, sent out regular supplies of provisions and other necessaries to Canada, and proved himself in every respect the visible guardian angel of the Ursuline Mission. In these charitable offices he persevered for twenty years from the period of which we now write, and then his holy life was crowned by a saintly death. On the 8th of May, 1659, he retired to his oratory for evening meditation, as was his wont. His servant entering at the appointed hour, found him absorbed in prayer, and left him, as requested, to continue his devotions. Returning after some time, he noticed that his master still knelt in the very same spot and attitude as he had left him. He approached and spoke, but there was no answer: the hands were clasped, the eyes raised to heaven, the happy soul had flown to God!

Resuming the interrupted order of our history, we meet the Mother of the Incarnation for the last time on the shores of France. Her final adieu was addressed to the Mother Superior of Tours. If this letter breathes a sigh, it is rather one of longing for the land of her exile, than of regret for the land of her birth. "It is time for our last farewell," she writes, "for now our Lord summons us to follow wherever it shall please Him to lead. To-day the vessel will enter port, and as soon after as the wind

is favourable, we shall set sail. You can understand how long each moment of delay appears to one who desires to give her life for her God. O dear Mother! how powerful is the Divine Master of our hearts. If you could see the effects of His interior operations on our Canadian band, you would bless His goodness a thousand times. Every soul is on fire with love, and, at the same time, annihilated in its own unworthiness and abjection. . . . Madame de la Ville aux Clercs has presented us with some rich ornaments for our future church in Canada; she is, then, our first benefactress next to you, most dear Mother, who will always rank before all others, since, not to speak of other gifts, you have bestowed ourselves." Such was her leave-taking of her country, which she was never to see again; of her home, which henceforth would know her no more for ever. "The earth with its fulness is the Lord's" (Ps. xxiii. 1), therefore all parts of it were alike to her, since in all she could find her God; in all she could unite her heart to the loving heart of Jesus in His own Sacrament; from all she could see in the distance the heavenly home where her heart and hopes reposed, for there dwelt her Treasure. Yet a little while, and the golden gates must open to her, for had she not our Lord's own promise, that they who renounce all things for His sake shall have everlasting life in exchange? Meantime, while waiting for the vision of the beauty of her God, she would find as much happiness as she looked for on earth, in labouring and suffering to promote His honour and extend His reign.

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THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION.

THIRD PERIOD, 1639—1672.

LIFE IN CANADA.

CHAPTER I.

EMBARKATION.—VOYAGE.—ARRIVAL IN QUEBEC.—
FIRST DWELLING.

IT was on the 4th of May, 1639, that the 'St. Joseph' set sail from Dieppe. The coincidences were cheering: with St. Joseph for pilot, the sweet Star of the Sea for beacon light, and the Mother of St. Augustine for protectress, the good ship might fairly have been expected to weather all storms and brave all perils. It was accompanied by some other vessels, bound like itself for the Western World. Many a guardian angel must have rejoiced at the departure of that little fleet, bearing God's messengers of salvation to nations seated in darkness and enveloped in the shades of death. On board the 'St. Joseph,' as the safest and most commodious of the ships, was the Ursuline colony, five in number, including the Foundress with her secular companion, and three Hospital Sisters from Dieppe, who were going to establish a house of the Hotel Dieu at Quebec,

under the auspices of the Duchess d'Aiguillon, niece to Cardinal Richelieu. Father Vimont, a Jesuit, took passage in this ship; Fathers Poncet and Chaumonot each in one of the others, thus the better to ensure spiritual aid for the whole crew.

It was with joy in her heart, and thanksgiving on her lips, that the Venerable Mother turned her face towards the great goal of her earthly hopes, the savage land, where, as she said, she would have the chance of risking her life for love of Him who had bestowed it. The first movement of the vessel in that direction seemed to her like a step towards the bliss of heaven, and, under the sheltering wings of Providence, she felt as tranquil on the treacherous waters as a child reposing at peace in its mother's arms.

It was not long before the travellers had an opportunity of realizing how securely grounded are the hopes which rest in God. Scarcely had they lost sight of the French shore, when they came in view of a Spanish fleet, evidently bearing towards them. The only means of escape was by sailing close to the English coast. Thanks to Divine Providence, the plan succeeded, but as it involved a deviation from their direct course, their progress was, in consequence, so much retarded, that they did not clear the Channel until the 20th of May.

The cabin assigned to the Sisters in the 'St. Joseph' was transformed into a miniature monastery, where the conventional exercises were daily gone through with admirable fervour and regularity. Meditation, Mass, and Holy Communion, sanctified the early hours, and at stated intervals the Office was recited

in choir by the Ursulines on one side, and the Hospital Sisters on the other, Father Vimont presiding. Although the voyage was very long and tempestuous, the Holy Sacrifice was omitted only on thirteen days of exceptional storm.

"They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in the great waters; these have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Ps. cxi. 23, 24). It was the Feast of the Holy Trinity. The last sounds of the morning Office had just arisen from the Sisters' little sanctuary, when with the dying echo of the song of praise mingled a cry of terror from the watch on deck. In the dense fog of the preceding night, the ship had drifted alarmingly close to an iceberg, but of this peril the crew, of course, remained unconscious while the fog continued. At last the mist yielded to the sun's rays, and then the awful spectacle broke on them in all its horrors. The iceberg was of enormous dimensions. It looked, the Venerable Mother tells us, like a fortified city floating on the deep; its frowning towers and battlements relieved here and there by tall graceful spars, which imagination could easily have transformed into spires and pinnacles of churches and turrets. On it came proudly through the waters, as if impatient to crush the frail vessel that lay in its path, utterly helpless and all but hopeless. Even the elements seemed to have conspired for the destruction of that devoted ship; no friendly breeze arose to send it bounding beyond the reach of danger; the winds were hushed, and in the struggle for life, its chances were as nothing. Death seemed so inevitable and so near, that Father Vimont gave a

general absolution, and all prepared as best they could to meet the fate from which there appeared no escape. But where, meantime, was the heavenly Star to whose guidance they had confided themselves so lovingly and so implicitly? Temporarily hidden, for the trial of their faith and trust, but ready to shine out with renewed brightness as soon as both should have been sufficiently proved. Just as the last faint hope was vanishing, Father Vimont made a vow in the name of the ship's company to perform a specified act of devotion in honour of the Mother of God, if she would deign to take compassion on them in this extremity of distress. Swifter than thought, the prayer for mercy reached the throne of Heaven's Queen, and with equal rapidity came the answer. As a last chance, the captain issued orders to turn the helm in a particular direction; the steersman, misunderstanding, turned it in the opposite, and, wonderful to say, the apparent mistake saved the ship. Obeying the new impulse, it was borne to one side of the dreaded iceberg, and, when once out of its direct path, the imminence of the danger was over. As it floated past the enormous moving mountain, the rescued crew could vividly realize the peril which they had escaped, and estimate as it deserved the extent of their debt of gratitude to the Heavenly Mother who had befriended them so effectually in the hour of their extreme need.

After a tedious and in many ways trying voyage of three months, the 'St. Joseph' touched at Tadoussac, where to their great joy, the Sisters met several Indians. Never having seen white people before,

the poor savages were lost in astonishment, but how did their wonder redouble when they learned that these ladies were "great captains' daughters," as they would themselves have expressed it, who had quitted home, country, and all the comforts of civilized life, for no other purpose than to come and teach them and their children how to escape eternal fire, and ensure everlasting happiness! They could not comprehend the strange tidings, and to discover if possible the real object of the new-comers, they followed along the shore as the ship resumed its way to Quebec, keeping a close and watchful eye on its movements.

The missionaries spent their first night in Canada at the Isle of Orleans, which they reached on the evening of the 31st of July. As they landed, the sun had just set in all the splendour which his setting is wont to wear in Canada. The sky was literally glowing with gorgeous colours of every hue, intermingled with ethereal gold, as if in descending to his rest, the mighty monarch had left a fold of his mantle of glory floating on the western heavens, to symbolize that brighter mantle of celestial light which soon would envelop the benighted race whom those devoted missionaries had come so far to seek and to help to save. The island was uninhabited, so three wigwams were constructed in Indian fashion, one for the Nuns, one for the Jesuits, and a third for the sailors. Unable to contain their holy joy, the Sisters entoned a canticle of thanksgiving, and for the first time since their creation, those venerable woods re-echoed with songs of praise to the one true God and His adorable Incarnate Son.

On the following day, August the 1st, 1639, the missionaries reached Quebec. Their first act on landing, was to kneel and reverently press their lips to the soil of the adopted country which was to be to them thenceforth in place of home and fatherland. They were received with the greatest enthusiasm. The moment they stepped on shore, a salute was fired from Fort St. Louis. They were met at the landing-place by the whole population headed by the Governor-General, Monsieur de Montmagny, and the Jesuit Fathers of the colony, and after mutual salutations, were escorted to the church, where the holy Sacrifice was offered with all the solemnity that circumstances permitted, the ceremony concluding with the Te Deum. After having been hospitably entertained by the Governor, the Sisters of the two communities proceeded to their destined dwellings. As a mark of the general joy, the day was inscribed in the red letter calendar and work totally suspended.

The next day, the Jesuits conducted the Sisters to the mission at Sillery, already noticed in the introductory chapter as formed on the model of the Reductions of Paraguay. It would need a skilful artist to paint that beautiful scene ; on the one hand, the heavenly joy of the Mother of the Incarnation and her companions, at sight of the Indian children, for whose spiritual and temporal welfare their hearts had so long yearned with more than mother's love ; on the other, the amazement of the little ones at finding themselves the objects of so much unwonted solicitude. Utterly bewildered, they at first received the Sisters' caresses with the characteristic caution

and reserve of their nation, but the language of kindness is easily understood, and very soon the children had rightly interpreted their visitors' affectionate advances. Attracted by their gentleness, their affability, their unmistakable disinterestedness, they followed them step by step through the hamlet, gaining confidence every moment. With the whole savage population for escort, the Sisters proceeded to the little church, which was the chief ornament, as well as the great treasure of the village, and there the Indians all joined in a hymn which the Jesuit Fathers had composed for them in their own language. The strain was simple, the temple humble, the congregation illiterate and poorly clad, yet who shall say that colonnaded aisle or fretted dome of proud cathedral ever resounded with music sweeter in the ear of heaven, than was that unpretending hymn of the despised Indians! Who would not envy the emotions of the Venerable Mother and her fervent Sisters, as they knelt in the lowly church among the poor savages in the hamlet of Sillery! This visit over, the Ursulines and Hospitaliers separated, each community repairing to its appointed home. The Ursulines were located in the Lower Town, at the foot of the mountain road, not far from the spot occupied later by the Church of Our Lady of Victories. The Hospital Sisters were lodged near Fort St. Louis.

The abode assigned to the Ursulines until a monastery could be built for them, contained only two apartments, the larger of which, sixteen feet square, served at once as choir, parlour, refectory and common dormitory; the second was reserved for

the school-room. A little shed near the house was fitted up as a chapel, and although so very poor as forcibly to recall the stable of Bethlehem, it was precious to them beyond words to tell, for there the adorable Sacrifice was henceforth daily offered, and there too at all times dwelt quite close to them in the Sacrament of His love, the Divine Spouse for whose sake they had renounced themselves and all things here below. A wooden palisade round the dwelling supplied the place of cloister walls. In this most miserable abode they spent three years, amidst unimaginable privations and inconveniences, exposed to extreme cold in winter, and overpowering heat in summer; breathing the air vitiated by a crowd of Indians, whose uncleanly habits are proverbial, and whose very clothes exhaled a sickening odour. When the children presented themselves at the school for the first time, their attire was scanty, and of the coarsest materials. They wore a mass of tangled hair, guiltless since first it began to grow, of all acquaintance with scissors, brush or comb, and they were covered all over with a greasy substance, which to judge from the care employed in laying it on, must have been deemed an indispensable finishing touch to the juvenile Indian's toilet. To bring that untidy hair into order, and to remove that personal adornment, unsightly in appearance, as unattractive in aroma, became a question of privilege. The Foundress claimed it as her right, because as she said, she was fit for nothing else, but others thought themselves entitled to the honour too, so finally a compromise was agreed on, and all had their turn. The children's uncivilized ways must no doubt

have at first occasioned many a mortification to the Sisters ; for instance, the Mother of the Incarnation tells us that they daily found some disgusting mixture in their food, a bunch of hair, a handful of cinders, or even an old shoe being no uncommon addition to the ordinary ingredients, yet so completely did grace triumph over nature in these Christian heroines, that unsavoury as was the seasoning of their soup, and countless as were the discomforts of their position, they enjoyed indescribable happiness in their poverty, and preferred their humble lodging with its uncouth inmates, to the grandest mansion without them. Their dwelling, they called the "Louvre," and in their poor pupils, the eye of faith enabled them to discern ornaments more costly, more precious and more prized than all the splendour which art can devise and wealth purchase for the embellishment of regal palaces, for what is the value of a palace, compared with that of a soul ?

CHAPTER II.

OPENING OF SCHOOLS.—MODIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONS.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW MONASTERY.

THE Mother of the Incarnation at once recognised in her adopted country, that which had been represented to her in her prophetic vision : the lofty mountains, the vast forests, the boundless plains, the general aspect and the minute details, all were the same, except that the mist was less heavy. She was in the land to which God Himself had called her,

as in the olden days He had called the patriarch to the land of promise, and in her sacrifice, as in that of Abraham, a great result was involved; to her obedience, as to his, a magnificent reward was attached. Not only was she to bring a blessing to Canada in her own person, elevating it by her lessons and embalming it with her virtues; she was moreover to found a community of Ursulines, who inheriting her spirit, would perpetuate her labours and immortalize her zeal. She was to erect an edifice to the Lord, in which His name should be taught and His praises sung, not for the years of her own life only, but through ages to come, and by generations yet unborn. She was to inaugurate the work of education, for which her natural capabilities so eminently fitted her, and which under God was to be the efficient instrument in her own hands for the present improvement of the colony; in those of her future spiritual children for the development of the work so happily begun. That work was very great, but it must be owned too that its instrument was very perfect.

Without delay the little community entered on its special function, the instruction of youth, opening schools on a limited scale both for Indians and French. Before they could begin to teach the former, it was of course necessary to learn their languages. In order the more readily to accomplish the difficult task, they agreed to divide the study, the Mothers of the Incarnation and Cecilia of the Cross applying themselves to the Algonquin, the Mother St. Joseph to the Huron, and under the direction of Fr. le Jeune, so rapid was their progress, that in

two months they were judged capable of catechising their young charge. Later in life, the Venerable Mother learned the Huron.

The charity and fortitude of the Mothers was very soon put to a severe test. Towards the end of August, the small-pox broke out among the savages, with whom it is usually fatal. After spreading with frightful rapidity through the hamlet of Sillery, it showed itself at the Ursuline Convent in Quebec, which was soon transformed into an hospital. Some of the children contracted the disease three different times, and four died of it. Through the protection of heaven, their devoted nurses escaped under circumstances which rendered their preservation almost miraculous. Night and day they watched their beloved patients, inhaling only the plague-tainted air of the small, overcrowded room, and having continually to step across the infected beds, which for want of space were laid closely together along the floor. During the six months which the malady lasted, these heroines of charity seemed to vie with each other in the performance of the most humbling and revolting offices, the Foundress setting the example of self-abnegation and devotedness. Their sole apprehension all through, was lest the panic-stricken savages might remove their children from the monastery, and thus deprive them of the spiritual blessings in store, an idea being prevalent among the unconverted Indians, that the small-pox was a consequence of receiving baptism, and of associating with the French. Fortunately the fear proved groundless, for the little ones were afterwards confined in larger numbers than ever, to the care of their

tender, self-sacrificing Ursuline mothers. When at last the contagion disappeared, the wardrobe of the charitable Sisters was found not to have been the least of the sufferers in the cause, every available article of clothing having been converted into bandages for the sores of the poor patients.

The accounts from Canada might naturally have been expected rather to check than to encourage vocations for the Ursuline mission, but on the contrary, each letter from the Mother of the Incarnation to her Sisters of Paris and Tours, served only to stimulate a holy emulation to share in her sacrifices. "To enter," she says, "into the true spirit of a missionary to Canada, the soul must die to all things created; on this point, the Almighty Master is inexorable. Interior death is no doubt the sure road to life in God, but who can describe what it costs nature thus to die!" Notwithstanding the Venerable Mother's forewarnings, the Mother Superior of the Paris convent prevailed on the Archbishop to allow two of the Sisters to follow their call to Canada. The privileged two were the Mother St. Athanasius and St. Clare, who in the world had borne the names of Margaret de Flécelles and Anne le Bugle. On the 7th of July, 1640, they landed at Quebec, to the great joy of their expectant Sisters. This addition to the original number necessitated the immediate building of a monastery, which want of means had hitherto retarded.

It has been already noticed in our rapid sketch of the Ursuline Order, that, while its spirit and end are everywhere uniform, the great family having but one heart and one soul in God, the particular rules and

practices of the different Congregations vary on some points. As these separate Congregations are never intermingled, no confusion or inconvenience can possibly arise from difference of usages, but in the instance of the Quebec Ursulines, the case was altered. The Mothers of the Incarnation and St. Joseph were of the Congregation of Bordeaux, which does not make the vow of the instruction of youth; the rest of the Sisters belonged to that of Paris, which does. Again, there were some points of difference in the costume of the two Congregations. As they were henceforth to form but one community, it was evident to all that diversity in any particular, would, for many reasons, be inadmissible. But, if uniformity of life was indispensable, much tact and prudence were needed in the adoption of the means best calculated to establish it. Happily, the Mother of the Incarnation excelled in these great gifts, and, best of all, she possessed in an eminent degree that heavenly wisdom derived from her habitual communication with the Divine Source of light. She held many consultations with her Sisters, evincing in all her suggestions the practical good sense, mature experience, and gentle moderation so conspicuous in her. As the little assembly had no object at heart but the glory of God, their deliberations were quickly and happily closed. In the decisions adopted, the natural feelings of both parties seem to have been respectfully and tenderly considered. It was arranged first, that the vow of instruction should be taken by all, but under the condition that it should bind the Sisters of the Congregation of Bordeaux only during their stay in

Canada; secondly, that the costume of the Congregation of Bordeaux should be substituted for that of Paris. Some other necessary modifications of the rules were agreed on with equal unanimity. The decision was referred for approval to the Communities of Paris and Tours, to whom it gave the most unqualified satisfaction. The particular rules then accepted were observed until 1647, when, at the request of the Community, Father Lalemant drew up others equally in accordance with the engagements of the Sisters, but better adapted to their new country. These continued in force until 1682, when, at the recommendation of Bishop Laval, the Ursulines of Quebec were affiliated to those of the Congregation of Paris.

Uniformity of observance being thus established, the fervent Sisters pursued their work with redoubled zeal, exhibiting in their daily practice the virtues of the ancient solitaries; sustained in the hourly trials of their mortified lives by that heavenly love which sweetens suffering, and encouraged in their difficulties by the example of a Superior who never asserted her authority except to claim for herself the largest share of the common hardships, seeming to think that the first place in rank, entitled her also to the place nearest her crucified Lord. It was a common saying of these generous lovers of the cross, that if they had anything to complain of in Canada, it was that they had not enough to suffer. "You say," wrote the Mother of the Incarnation, some years later, "that my actual experiences of Canada are something very different from my anticipations. You are right in the remark, but not in

the sense which you attach to it. My life of labour and privation is so full of consolation, that I now thoroughly realize how sweet is the yoke and how light the burden of the Lord. The happiness which I experience when I teach a poor savage to know God, is a solace in pain and a refreshment in weariness." Canada, with all its sharp thorns, she called her paradise, and the company of her uncouth little Indian pupils, she prized a thousand times beyond that of the greatest and highest of earthly queens.

In the spring of 1641 the foundation stone of the monastery was laid by Madame de la Peltrie in the present Upper Town of Quebec, and there, at the close of nearly two centuries and a half, the Ursuline Convent still stands. At the period we speak of, the ground was not even cleared; the woodman's axe was the first implement needed in the construction of the new monastery; tradesmen were few, wages high, and the poverty of the country extreme. But at the time of the Venerable Mother's prophetic vision, more than once referred to, our Lord had told her to go to Canada, and there build a house for Jesus and Mary. He who had given the command would, she knew, supply the means for its execution, so with boundless trust in His providence, she confidently undertook her task, although to human prudence it might have seemed hopeless.

CHAPTER III.

WORK AT THE "LOUVRE."—PIETY, ZEAL, AND PROGRESS OF THE PUPILS.—LITTLE TRUANTS.—BANQUETS.

MEANTIME, the work of zeal and love went on actively at the "Louvre." Besides the "seminarists," or resident pupils, who were always as numerous as space admitted, and the day scholars, who included all children old enough to be taught, adults of both sexes received daily instruction—the women in the school-room, the men at the parlour grating—all manifesting equal eagerness to hear the word of God ; all afterwards showing in their altered lives the miraculously transforming power of Divine grace. So great was the desire of the seminarists to learn, that they would ask their mistresses to punish them if they failed in diligence ; and when any one had committed a fault, she, of her own accord, begged pardon on her knees. The piety of these poor children of the wilds was truly admirable, and especially so was the ardour with which they received the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus in His Adorable Sacrament. "I never saw livelier joy," wrote the Mother St. Joseph, "than in three of our pupils, each aged twelve, when told that they were to be admitted to the Holy Table at Easter. They listened, as if entranced, to the instructions on the Most Blessed Eucharist, and seemed to possess a comprehension of the Mystery of Love quite beyond their years. They begged to be allowed to fast on the eve of their first Communion, a practice which they

afterwards observed every time they communicated. One day, while a Jesuit Father was speaking to them of their approaching happiness, a little child of six ventured to present her baby pleadings to be allowed to join them. The Father told her she was too young. "Oh, Father!" she said, "do not send me away because I am too young; you will see that I shall soon be as old and as tall as my companions." She was allowed to assist at the instructions, which she understood and retained so as to surprise all who questioned her; nevertheless, she had to resign herself to wait yet longer for the much-desired day. Her mother, coming soon after to see her, the child undertook to instruct her in the holy truths of faith by the help of pictures. Having taught her to pray, she proceeded to initiate her in the mysteries of a lesson in reading, pointing out the letters in a book. To please her dear child, the good Mother repeated the sounds one by one as if she had been saying a lesson. "When our child returns to us," she said to the Mothers, "she will prepare her father and me for Baptism, which we are very desirous to receive." "The sentiments of our pupils on the Holy Communion," wrote Madame de la Peltrie, "are most edifying. When asked why they desire so much to receive it, they tell us that it is because Jesus Himself will enter their souls, to purify and adorn them. The countenance of my god-daughter, Mary, sometimes actually beams with joy, and, if questioned as to its cause, she is sure to answer, "I am soon to make my first Communion." The Indian pupils were sometimes heard discussing what each considered the greatest favour she had received from God.

The answer from one would be, "That He has made me a Christian;" from another, "That He became man to rescue me from hell." On one of these occasions, a little voice was heard to say, "The greatest favour that Jesus does us, is to give Himself for our food in the Holy Eucharist." The speaker, though only nine years of age, had made her first Communion a year and a half before. The Mother of the Incarnation, who mentions the circumstance, adds the reflection, "Are not such sentiments admirable in children born in the very bosom of barbarism and infidelity?" If a pupil saw a companion commit a fault, she checked her by the simple words, "Take care, or your guardian angel will go away."

In proportion as the souls of these poor children opened to the softening influence of religion, so did the hitherto latent qualities of their better nature manifest themselves more clearly. In the genial atmosphere of charity, their hearts expanded as flowers in sunshine, developing a depth, a constancy, and a delicacy of feeling which none would have suspected to underlie manners so cold, and characters apparently so apathetic. They learned fully to appreciate, and sought only how best they might return the tenderness of their devoted Mothers, and, as affection is a ready teacher, they were not slow to discover that the best proof of their gratitude would be found in strict compliance with the wishes of their instructresses; hence the docility to directions, the submission to reproof, the respect for school regulations, exemplified in the daily lives of the seminarists, and all the more to be admired that

such practices were foreign to their habits and repugnant to their nature. Madame de la Peltrie writes that they showed her the deference and love of fond children, as well as a degree of refinement which, she says, she would never have expected from savages. In her temporary charge of them during the nuns' annual retreat, she found no difficulty in enforcing silence; it was enough for them to know that their dear Mothers were spending the week with God; the mere fear of even slightly disturbing them, proved a sufficient restraint. If the Foundress occasionally happened to be absent for a short time on some errand of mercy, they were inconsolable until her return, which they greeted with joyous acclamations. Once they were told that the Mother of the Incarnation was ill, and would die if they made a noise. At the sound of the word *die*, they burst into tears, and, with a consideration which would have done honour to more polished natures, they kept perfectly still, afraid, as it seemed, to move, or almost to breathe, lest dreaded death should come and claim their first, best earthly friend. As early as 1641, the Venerable Mother described the converts in general as transformed beings—barbarians no longer, but fervent Christians, animated by a truly heavenly spirit. She, too, remarks, that in refinement of feeling, they might have competed with many a favoured child of civilization, and so charmed was she with the beautiful simplicity of their piety, that she declares she would rather have listened to their unstudied eloquence, than to the finished oratory of the first speaker in Europe.

A remarkable characteristic of the converts, both

adult and young, was their ardour for the propagation of the faith among their countrymen; not only, then, had the Mothers the consolation of seeing the fruit of their labours among their immediate pupils, but that also of knowing that through the zeal of these, the heavenly word would be borne far and wide over the pagan land. So impressed were the Jesuit Fathers with the value of this kind of apostolate, that they were wont to say, "One converted Indian, who leads a truly Christian life, can do more good among the infidels than three missionaries." This spirit of zeal early manifested itself among the seminarists at the convent. It was admirable to hear the more grown teaching the less advanced the Christian doctrine, repeating the questions which had been asked to themselves at catechism, and exciting the interest of the new-comers by explaining the subject of a pious picture, or relating an attractive history. Even some of the very young ones had their own little mission of charity. One interesting child in particular, was to be seen surrounded by a class of tiny ones younger than herself, whom she assiduously catechised, teaching them especially how to prepare for confession, and exhorting them above all things never to conceal a sin. To the zeal of a Huron girl named Teresa, the first Ursuline pupil of that nation, many of her countrymen were indebted for their conversion. Though only about thirteen years of age, she spoke to them of God with an earnestness and a force that they could not resist. One of the converts, wishing to test her, feigned to have given up the idea of receiving baptism nearly on the eve of the day fixed for its

administration. Inexpressibly grieved, she reproached him for his inconstancy in the strongest terms, but, finding that her eloquence seemed to produce no impression, she hastened, all in tears, to the Mother of the Incarnation, beseeching her to use her influence with the supposed apostate. "Oh!" she exclaimed in the vehemence of her indignation, "if I could only have broken the grating which divided us, I would have beaten him well!" The astonished Mother soon learned the truth, but it was difficult to undeceive the sorely-afflicted Teresa.

Not seeing the Mothers during the eight days of their annual retreat, the savages concluded that they concealed themselves to pray. On one of these occasions Teresa determined to imitate them, so she hid behind the palisade, and spent the day in prayer. When discovered at last by one of her companions, and asked what she was doing, she replied, "I hide like the Mothers to pray for you, for myself, for the French, and for the Indians." "She is so constant in her faith, so well instructed, so fervent," said one of her own race, "that it would seem as if she had not been born a Huron. When she comes home she will be looked up to by the whole tribe. Her teacher must surely be one of the wisest persons in all France." On her way back to her own country, she was seized by the Iroquois, together with Father Jogues and some of her relatives, and in her captivity not only retained her faith, but professed it with the heroism of a martyr. Deeply concerned at her fate, the Ursulines interested all the authorities in her behalf, and, thanks to the exertions of her good Mothers, her deliverance was stipulated

for in the arrangement of the articles of peace at the general meeting in 1645.

Besides religious and moral training, the seminarians received a simple elementary education, comprising chiefly reading, writing, and needlework. Before long, two of the more grown were able to write their own language so well as to venture on letters to an absent Jesuit Father. Great was the delight of their parents when shown the mysterious productions. They took them reverently into their hands, turned them cautiously in every direction, and begged to hear the contents again and again, equally charmed and surprised to find that the paper could speak, and in their own language too. It was always a matter of wonder to them to hear that a few characters traced on paper could convey thought to the remotest distance.

Another object of intense amazement was the first clock brought by the missionaries to the country of the Hurons. They called it 'The Captain of the Day,' and many were the inquiries each time they came, how often he had spoken since their last visit. Lest they should lose the benefit of any of his remarks, they sometimes waited hour after hour to hear him speak again. They were puzzled about his food, but never at a loss to interpret the stroke which announced the hour of the good Fathers' frugal meal, in which they fully calculated on sharing.

The Indians are fond of music, so to attract the adults, the Mothers of the Incarnation and St. Joseph taught their little pupils to sing hymns, and many a grave chief listened with delight to the simple lay, returning the compliment by a perform-

ance in Indian measure. A record has been preserved of a certain old-fashioned stringed instrument in the convent which greatly charmed the audience. Among the early pupils was a child of twelve, whose disposition was so gentle that she received the name of Agnes, and whose ear was naturally so attuned to all sweet sounds, that she was considered capable of being taught to accompany her own warble on the said wonderful instrument. When her parents removed her in due time from school, still she sang God's praises among the echoes of the woods—not only sang herself, but taught to others the hymns she had learned in her Ursuline home—gathering a little choir about her in the heart of the silent wilderness, and making it her holy joy thus to promote piety among her companions. The predestined child desired to consecrate herself to God in religion, but her Heavenly Father accepted the wish, and called her to Himself at the age of fifteen.

But if the labours of the first Mothers were very richly repaid by the pupils in general, it must be owned that their forbearance was often severely tried by some among them, known as the vagrants of the woods. The wild, free life of the forest had charms for these, for which all the comforts of civilization could not compensate. Like caged birds, they would flutter against the bars, and, at the first opportunity, break through them, to fly back to their cabins and independence. Once a young Algonquin was thus attacked by home-sickness; the Mothers did their best to comfort and encourage her, but all in vain. The melancholy mood grew deeper and darker—so dark at last, that, unable to bear the

restraint any longer, the truant jumped through the window, leaped the cloister palisade, and fled in the direction of the woods. In a few minutes she looked back, expecting to see a pursuer, but, finding that her flight had caused no concern, she began already to repent of it. Her reception at home was rather cool, and when, a few days after, she proposed to her mother to return to the monastery, the readily accorded permission was accompanied by a significant hint not to leave again without being sent. With a light heart, she presented herself at the convent door; but, alas! it would not open. Her place, the portress told her, had been given to another pupil. Vain were her entreaties, her tears and her sobs, for the Mother of the Incarnation had decided on strict measures with the little wanderers, who, by their restlessness, disturbed the peace and order of the house. But nothing like perseverance! Poor Catherine watched for the arrival of the day pupils, and so effectually did she excite their compassion by her tale of woe, that they agreed to let her fall into the ranks. When the door unclosed for their admission, she rushed to the feet of the Mother of the Incarnation, confessed her fault, and asked pardon. Touched by her penitence and promises, the good Mother relented; Catherine was restored to favour, and never again did she deserve a reproof or even a reproach.

Another child, aged eight, stole away from the monastery, and spent the winter with her parents at some distance from Quebec. When they returned to the town in spring, she applied for re-admission, but the request was refused. She persisted, but so

did the Mothers too. At last she bethought herself that by joining the procession on the festival of Corpus Christi, she would be entitled to accompany her parents to the feast at the convent, which was always understood to follow the devotions, and she calculated that once there, it would be easy to keep her ground. Accordingly, she took her place among the guests, but when the time came for retiring, instead of joining them, she threw herself on her knees at the door and repeated her petition. Another refusal—but, determined to succeed, she crouched outside the door. Night came, and with it came rain, and still the repentant culprit kept her post, so the kind-hearted Mothers were constrained to admit her, and she eventually became an example of virtue to the school.

The banquets at the "Louvre," to which we have alluded, were conducted after a very original fashion; the bill of fare was restricted to one dish, and this, as the receipt shows, could be prepared with little expenditure of culinary skill, yet it fully satisfied the simple guests. It was composed of bread, maize or pea-flour, and black plums, all boiled together; and, as the savages relish unctuous food, a few melted tallow candles and some rich pork were added for seasoning. On this dainty dish, as many as sixty or eighty Indians were occasionally regaled at a time, in what they considered splendid style. The Indians have no fixed hours for meals. Hunger is the signal for beginning; the disappearance of the provisions that for concluding. The latter point is one of strict etiquette.

It would seem as if even the ingenuity of charity

had left nothing undone for the gratification of the poor savages, but it was not so. One day that Father Lalemant visited the school-room, the children gathered round him with an air of mystery and importance, as if burdened with some weighty secret. "Look at our clothes, Father," they said; "you can see that they are faded and worn, and, as our Mothers do not give us new ones, we cannot look as smart as the French girls, which makes us sorrowful." Much amused, the Father reported the complaint of the little ones to the Venerable Mother. Without showing the least surprise at it, or reminding the children of all her generosity, she at once provided each with a new red dress, adding new shoes and stockings, and assisting to prepare the finery with her own hands, lest, as she said, any impression of sadness might connect itself with the memory of their first instruction in the faith, and the Divine seed be thus hindered from striking deep root and producing rich fruit.

Madame de la Peltre had provided for the maintenance of six seminarists, but this number had gradually swelled to eighteen, all of whom were not only supported but likewise clothed from the common fund. The adult Indians who crowded to the monastery for instruction, also expected and invariably received hospitality, which, was, moreover, occasionally extended to the families of the pupils. The pecuniary resources of the convent were wholly inadequate to meet so many claims on its charity, and at the same time, defray its own moderate expenditure. But the self-denying Mothers struggled bravely through their poverty, and by the generous

aid of benefactors in France, they managed not only to continue their alms to the adults and to retain their seminarists, but by degrees considerably to increase the number of these last.

Among the first pupils were some of very tender age, little ones of six and less. One of these was brought to the Mother of the Incarnation, all covered with small-pox. Young as she was, she had attended her parents through the terrible malady, and after the death of both, had contracted it herself. She recovered, and proved her gratitude to her devoted friend by showing herself so perfect a model of obedience, that she would even anticipate orders, running to put herself in the way if she thought there was a chance of her being employed. Another would begin her baby prayers of her own accord the moment she awoke, say her rosary during Mass, and recreate herself by singing little hymns. A third, of scarcely four, paralysed in all her limbs, gave ample exercise to the patience of the kind mothers. Once her mistress had to rise four times in one night to soothe the poor little sufferer. Next day, a companion remarked, "Charity," for so the child was called, "Charity, you gave a great deal of trouble to your mistress last night." "I know I did," coolly replied Charity, "but my dear mistress is **very** good, and what she did for me was just what she would have done for the Child Jesus, if He had been in my place." Ah, wise little one! you have found out the secret—"Whatever you did to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40). In the eye of faith, the untutored Indian was as exalted, because as much the representative of God, as the lady of

noble birth or even royal lineage ; so, each object of loving care in that house of charity might equally have said of every act of every Sister, " What she did for me, is what she would have done for the Child Jesus in my place."

CHAPTER IV.

NEW TRIALS.—MADAME DE LA PELTRIE IN MONTREAL.—ACTIVE LIFE OF THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATION.—FIRST ELECTIONS.—REMOVAL TO THE NEW MONASTERY.—RETURN OF MADAME DE LA PELTRIE.

WHILE the Mother of the Incarnation was thus spending her days in the practice of the heroic charity and austere penance which possessed equal attractions for her, pursuing the work of zeal which of all others she loved best, and living in the heart of what was, perhaps, the most fervent portion of God's Church in those days, it would appear to us as if, though still on earth, she had partially anticipated heaven ; but heaven, even on earth, was not to be yet, for the measure of her merits, and, therefore, of her sufferings, was not filled up. As we have already more than once remarked, the Almighty had called her to a sublime degree of purity of soul ; to the end of life, therefore, He would furnish her with opportunities of advancing in the virtue which here below can never attain its last perfection, some alloy of the love of self mingling to the end with the love of

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God, even in the holiest. As the virtue is one which thrives best under the cross, He would re-conduct her to her well-known place on Calvary, and subject her once more to the salutary action of interior tribulation. She felt again as if suddenly deprived of all the Divine gifts and favours, and reduced to the very extreme of spiritual indigence. Her natural talents and capabilities seemed paralysed ; desolation overwhelmed her, temptations to anger, antipathy and even despair pressed on her. The last, especially, became so importunate, that she seemed to herself sometimes on the very brink of the dread abyss, and might have echoed the words of the Psalmist, "The sorrows of death have compassed me, and the perils of hell have found me" (Ps. cxiv. 3) Not only had the Almighty apparently withdrawn His gifts, but, hardest of all to bear, He had concealed Himself. Now and again a ray of heavenly consolation beamed on her afflicted soul, but, like the lightning's flash on the angry sky, it illumined for a moment, only to be followed by deeper darkness. To her internal agonies were added external trials of various kinds, including most painful contradictions and humiliations. Support from creatures there was none, and even the sympathy of friendship was denied her. She seemed to have lost confidence in her holiest advisers, while, by the permission of God, she herself became to others a subject of temptations to aversion. Oppressed with the sense of her utter unworthiness, and brought down to the lowest depth of interior abjection, she dared scarcely look at or address her Sisters. She was alone in her agony, like the Divine Sufferer in the garden, and, in the

spirit of utter annihilation of self, and entire abandonment to God, her desolate heart re-echoed the sublime cry of His agony, "Father, not my will but Thine be done."

It is her own teaching, that the nearer the soul approaches to God, the more distinctly also she discerns her sinfulness and misery; the more clearly she sees the many hitherto unsuspected windings and lurking-places of corrupt nature; the better, consequently, she understands how numerous still are the impediments which must be removed before she can fully and freely expand her wings and take her flight to her Lord. Of this truth she had now renewed personal experience. In the high degree of Divine union to which she had attained, she saw her imperfections in a clearer light than ever, and the view filled her with confusion and compunction. That by the help of Divine grace, she had through life been preserved from every sin of deliberation, was the opinion of competent judges, well acquainted with her soul's history. The imperfections which she so bitterly deplored were, then, only an occasional infidelity to the grace which had called her from early years to perfect detachment from creatures and from self, or, at most, they were but the faults of frailty, ignorance, surprise and inadvertence, from which even the saints are not exempt in this life; but, viewed as they now were in their closer contrast with the sanctity of God, they assumed a more serious aspect than ever before. Her habitual horror of the very slightest faults was intensified; her ordinary almost incredible care to avoid them, increased. Inflamed with a holy zeal for the vindication of the

rights of Divine justice, as well as with an insatiable ardour for the triumph of God's pure love in her soul, she humbly bowed beneath the hand that crucified her, confessing herself deserving of all chastisement, and praying that the last remnant of the love of self might be exterminated from her heart at any cost of suffering and humiliation. "O merciful Lord!" she cried, "send me a thousand torments, and as many deaths as I draw respirations, rather than permit that I should offend Thee." Looking on her slow interior martyrdom as the instrument in God's hands for the purification of her soul, she would not have exchanged its pangs for all imaginable joys united. Greatly as her trials on this occasion must have promoted her personal sanctification, a second important result was involved in them. In the generosity of her charity, she had offered herself to suffer for the sins of two persons whose conversion she most ardently desired; while, therefore, the Almighty "proved her as gold in the furnace, that she might be found worthy of Himself," He at the same time "received her as a victim of a holocaust," that through her sufferings other souls might be made worthy of Him too (Wisd. iii. 5, 6). But if He accepted the oblation, and rewarded the sacrifice, it was not until the victim had been entirely immolated.

As if to crown the tribulations of the Venerable Mother, it was while her interior trials were at their height, that Madame de la Peltrie, the main pillar of the Ursuline foundation, resolved to remove to Montreal, where a new settlement was about to be established as a check to the incursions of the

Iroquois. Monsieur de Maisonneuve, the destined founder, was accompanied by a troop of colonists, brave and chivalrous as himself; also by Mademoiselle Mance, whose particular mission was to open a convent of Hospital Sisters at Ville Marie, as the projected city was to be called. The season being too far advanced for the commencement of operations, the party passed the winter at Sillery, where Madame de la Peltrie made acquaintance with Mademoiselle Mance. The intended foundation naturally formed an ordinary topic of conversation during the long evenings, and so strongly was Madame de la Peltrie's interest in it excited, that in the end, she resolved to give it her personal co-operation. Not being bound to the Ursulines by vow or formal engagement of any kind, she was of course at perfect liberty to withdraw from them, but the parting from one so dear was very painful to all, especially the much tried Mother. The amiable Foundress had gained the affection and esteem both of the Sisters and the pupils, cheerfully sharing the labours and privations of the one, and devoting herself in the self-sacrificing spirit of true charity to the care of the others: all loved and regretted her, nevertheless she departed, impelled by the desire to accomplish what she considered a more useful work. In her zeal for souls, she would have flown, not merely to Montreal, but to the world's end, and when it appeared to her that by going, she could extend her sphere of good, and thereby more largely promote the glory of God, no hesitation was admitted. She was accompanied by Charlotte Barré. On the 17th of May, 1642, the colonists landed on the Isle of Montreal.

Besides the trial to their feelings, the separation from their Foundress was a source of serious pecuniary embarrassment to the Ursulines. If before, they had been poor, they were now reduced to absolute destitution. Madame de la Peltre having found it necessary to remove her furniture, they retained only a few articles which they had brought from France, among the rest, three beds for their fourteen pupils. "The children have to sleep on boards," wrote the Mother of the Incarnation; "we do what we can to soften the hard couches, and as a substitute for bed clothes, we borrow skins from the stores, the only alternative left us in our poverty." But it was not the extreme indigence around her that afflicted the Venerable Mother; the example of her Lord and Saviour had on the contrary rendered this precious in her eyes and dear to her heart. If her soul was rent, it was chiefly by the dread of having to dismiss her beloved pupils back to their native wilds. In one single year, fifty Indian children had been taught, and more than seven hundred adults of both sexes had received spiritual and corporal aid. Was this magnificent harvest to be thus prematurely blighted?

Monsieur de Bernières had formally announced the necessity of dismissing the pupils and discontinuing the new building, adding, that if Madame de la Peltre persisted in her present intention, the Sisters would have no alternative but to return to France, unless indeed some other charitable person would undertake the responsibility of providing for them. But gloomy as were the prospects of the little community, the Mother of the Incarnation never

wavered in her trust in God. She resolved to retain her scholars, to distribute her accustomed alms, and to continue the building, writing as usual to Monsieur de Bernières for supplies for the house, and inclosing him the bills for the workmen's wages. Who that witnessed her calm, brave fortitude, could have suspected how immensely the weight of the visible cross was aggravated by that of the invisible ? Yet it is certain that the external was but a faint image of the internal. Still, beneath their united pressure, she discharged her multiplied exterior duties with a punctuality, an energy and a presence of mind which proved the extent of her disengagement from self, while by her exactitude to the least of the conventional observances, she continued to sustain her claim to the title of a living rule. Acting on her own maxim, that fidelity in small things is the guardian of fidelity in greater, she knew no distinction between lesser and more important regulations ; in her view, all were of equal consequence. She took her share of the menial duties, which for the first years weighed heavily on the community in consequence of their having no lay Sisters. No indisposition or infirmity, no pressure of business or excess of fatigue could induce her to deviate in one iota from the practices of common life. Ever active and indefatigable, she might be seen, now teaching and tending her dear Indian children, now directing the building of the new convent, now superintending the domestic details of the monastery, and all the time fulfilling to the least particular the duties of her responsible office as Superior. She was the last to retire to rest at night, the first to appear in the morning, and ever

to be found either in communion with God, or engaged in the active occupations of her charge.

It was at this period that she commenced correspondence with several religious communities, and numerous pious seculars in France, in order to engage their interest for the Indians. The number of her letters is something wonderful, especially during her first twelve years in Canada, and the alms which she thus procured, supplied the most pressing wants of the institution. "This is but my second letter," she says in one place, "since the arrival of the ships; they leave in a fortnight, and I have to answer two hundred." In another, she remarks, "My hand is so tired that I can scarcely hold the pen, but so it is that we must pass our time, while waiting for the eternity which will never pass." The words, "Short labour, eternal rest," formed her ordinary motto. Besides her letters on business to persons of all conditions, she maintained a constant correspondence with her son and her niece from the time of their joining, the one the Benedictine, and the other the Ursuline Order. These last, like all her spiritual letters, are replete with solid maxims of practical piety, and manifest a knowledge of the secrets of the interior life which could have been acquired only in her close and habitual communications with God. While going through this almost incredible amount of work, she never lost her calm self-possession and firm control over natural feeling. More than twenty times in one morning, it has happened her to be interrupted at an occupation, and never by look or word was she known to betray annoyance or impatience.

The first elections at the Quebec Convent took place on the 12th of June, 1642, when the Mother of the Incarnation resumed the burden which for the previous three years she had borne by the appointment of the Archbishop of Tours. On the twenty-first of the following November, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, the little community bade adieu to the miserable dwelling which had sheltered them for three years, and become endeared as the scene of their first labours and their first successes in Canada. The new building was in so unfinished a state as to be barely habitable; consequently the first winter was one of extreme suffering from cold. Stoves were a luxury unknown for many a year, and to preserve themselves from being frozen at night, the poor Mothers had to sleep in something like wooden chests. Notwithstanding its many inconveniences, the new convent excited the unbounded admiration of the Indians, especially the children, who were overjoyed at the prospect of inhabiting so splendid a "Cabin."

After the Venerable Mother had borne her weight of mental anguish for three years, the Almighty was pleased to alleviate it, propitiated as it would seem by a new self-imposed and very heroic act of humiliation. Externally too, prospects brightened. After spending eighteen months in Montreal, Madame de la Peltre resolved to return to Quebec. Her zeal for the conversion of the savages urging her to attempt even impossibilities, she had for a time entertained serious thoughts of penetrating to the country of the yet pagan Hurons, but a Jesuit Father just returned from those missions, dissuaded her from an under-

taking so far above her strength. In compensation, she provided for the permanent support of an additional missionary in that district. While at Montreal, she wrote to the Mother of the Incarnation to explain that her great inducement in going there, had been the hope of establishing a convent of Ursulines in the town, a new proof that her holy ardour for the salvation of souls was worthy of all praise. During this visit, she stood sponsor at the baptismal font for an Algonquin Chief.

It is easier to imagine than to describe the joy with which her return was greeted by the Sisters, the pupils, and most of all, the Mother on whom had fallen the heaviest portion of the burden entailed by her absence. Now, no future parting need be dreaded. To the last breath of life she would cling to the friends whose difficulties and troubles she had so generously shared from the first, and among the most precious of her legacies to the Ursulines would be ranked the example of her zeal, her charity, her humility, and her admirable self-abnegation. Without assuming the obligations of a religious, she conformed in all respects to the rule and discipline of the house, and so remarkable was her punctuality, that the signal for regular observance was never given with greater exactitude, than when it happened to be her turn to ring the bell.

CHAPTER V.

**THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATION A VICTIM FOR
HER SON AND HER NIECE.—CONVERSION OF
BOTH.—MOTHER ST. ATHANASIUS ELECTED MOTHER
SUPERIOR.**

THE mental sufferings of the Mother of the Incarnation had abated at the end of three years, but they were very far from having wholly ceased. They were to be traced in part, as we have seen, to that heroic act of self-immolation by which she had offered herself as a victim to Divine justice for the salvation of two erring souls very dear to her heart, and until grace should have fully triumphed over both, her martyrdom was not to terminate. These objects of her holy solicitude were her son, and one of her nieces.

The former, as may be remembered, had applied for admission to the Jesuit novitiate, much about the time of the Venerable Mother's departure for Canada, and not being considered suitable for the Order, had been rejected. The disappointment preyed on him for a while, but hope soon succeeded to despondency. If the cloister was closed, the world, he argued, was open to him. Why not then seek in the latter, the happiness which he had vainly dreamed of finding in the former? Why not choose one among the many paths to distinction which untried life held out so temptingly, and take his chance of success as others had done before him? Lured onwards by ambition, he resolved to settle in Paris, naturally supposing that the Queen's well-

known veneration for his saintly Mother, would secure him her favour. The Duchess d'Aiguillon at once offered him her patronage, and the difficulties of the first start being thus happily removed, he seemed free to select his road to fortune.

And was he then really destined for nothing better than the slavery of the world ? Could it be true that that worthless world was one day to boast of having thrown its shackles round the heart of the son of Marie Guyart ? She had consecrated his soul to God before his eyes had opened to the light ; she had taught him his first prayer; she had given him his first impression of piety; she had instilled his first lesson, that it were better far to die a thousand deaths if that were possible, than live to commit one mortal sin. Had the remembrance of her teaching utterly vanished, and the last trace of her maternal influence quite faded away ? No, that could not be. The mother, who like her, has rightly understood the words maternal influence, and early taken care to establish her own, will hold the key to her child's heart while ever his heart throbs. Vast intervals may separate that mother and child ; oceans and years may lie between them, and still the mother's words will retain their grasp of her boy's soul, starting from its depths in the hour of temptation, to awaken the sweet echo of early lessons, and revive the memory of that last promise at parting, to be true to God, to conscience and the maternal teaching.

And if perchance the child should have forgotten the maxims and rejected the control of the mother, still can her influence reach his heart through the sure channel of her prayers and tears. The Christian

mother's prayers fall on the soul of her prodigal child like genial sunshine on the drooping plant ; her tears like cool dew on the parched earth—they revive, they warm, they soften. He cannot resist them, for they come laden with the heavenly grace which they have been the blessed means of winning from the all-merciful Heart of Jesus. This it was Claude Martin's happiness to experience. While he thought only of plunging into the vortex of the world, the Mother of the Incarnation prayed, and wept, and suffered without intermission to obtain his entire conversion. "It could not be that a child of those tears should perish."* As may be anticipated, his rebellious heart was finally won to God, wholly and for ever.

The circumstances of his conversion are singular. It happened one day that, weary of the noise and bustle of the great city, he retired to his quiet room to study. Before long he was disturbed by a knocking at the door, but, although he opened it promptly, he could see nobody. He resumed his study only to be a second and a third time similarly interrupted, and with a similar result. The occurrence was so strange, that he could explain it to himself only as the wondrous action of the hand of God. The voice of grace spoke to his heart, even more distinctly than the sound at the door had spoken to his ear. Without one moment's hesitation, he flew to Dom Raymond of St. Bernard, his mother's former director, and told him of the mysterious incident which in an instant had dispelled his dreams of

* Words of a Bishop to St. Monica, with reference to St. Augustine.

ambition, subdued his will, and changed him into a new being, and he concluded the strange communication by beseeching the Father in earnest terms, to guide him to the road to which God called. The unexpected news of the next day, was, that Claude Martin had suddenly renounced his very brilliant prospects in the world to join the Order of St. Benedict.

The joy and gratitude of his holy mother at the blessed tidings may be imagined. "It would be difficult, my very dear son," she writes, "to express the consolation which your letter afforded me. Impressed with the dangers to which you were exposed, I have suffered much on your account, especially during the past year, still I have ever been sustained by the firm hope that our all-good God would never utterly forsake the son from whom I had parted for His dear sake alone, and now I find that His mercy to you has not only realized, but surpassed my expectations. The world offered you some advantages, it is true, but how immeasurably inferior to the blessing which God has bestowed! You are now enrolled in the army of the Almighty King; take, then, well to heart the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God' (St. Luke ix. 62). The happiness in store for you is infinitely beyond any which this world could give. 'Count then all things here below to be but loss that you may gain Christ' (Phil. iii. 8). The example of your holy Father St. Benedict inculcates this generosity of spirit; imitate it faithfully, that so I may have the consolation of soon hearing that my uninterrupted

prayers of many years for your sanctification have at last found acceptance with God. I never pass a day without offering you as a sacrifice to Him on the Heart of His well-beloved Son, desiring and supplicating that you may be consumed as a perfect holocaust on that Divine Altar. If any one were to tell me that you had died a martyr's death, I think I should expire with joy; but be faithful to grace, die constantly to self, imitate the many eminent servants of God sanctified in your Order, and not only will the Almighty make you a great saint, but He will grant you the reward of a martyr too. If He should mercifully bring you to your religious profession, let me know the joyful tidings. Tell me also the particulars of your call to religion, and the manner of your correspondence with it. In a word, let me have the consolation of participating fully in your spiritual treasures. Pray for me very often. I meet you many times a day in God, and speak of you unceasingly to Jesus and Mary."

The novice embraced the cross of religion with holy ardour, and bore it with persevering fidelity. Cordially despising the world which had well nigh betrayed him, he renounced it thoroughly, and directed all the affections of his heart to God alone. Looking on religious perfection as the only object worthy of his ambition, he pursued the one great end with a fervour and an earnestness which ensured his rapid progress. His success in his vocation, and the diminution of his mother's trials, all along kept such equal pace, that she might safely have judged of the one by the other. Hence, when obscurity again enveloped her soul, she inferred that some obstacle

to his profession had arisen, and so the event proved. The difficulty being happily removed, he was permitted to seal the irrevocable act of his consecration to God by the solemn vows. After his promotion to the priesthood, he was appointed to some of the principal offices of his Order, and his humility taking the alarm, he wrote to his mother of his regret at being compelled to emerge from his dear solitude. "Do not say, my son," she replied, "that you prefer an obscure life to a higher sphere of action. Love the duties of the latter, not because they are more important in the eyes of men, but because they are in the order of God's will for you. It is well that you should be impressed with your nothingness, for on that foundation it is that the Almighty will erect the edifice of your perfection; but content yourself wherever He places you—there for you is sanctity. Whether your position is a high one or a low, be humble, and you will be happy." After having rendered important services to his Order, and contributed to the reformation of several abbeys, Dom Claude Martin died in the odour of sanctity at Marmoutier, on the 9th of August, 1696, aged seventy-seven. He survived his holy mother over twenty years, and after her death wrote the history of her life, employing principally as material her own relation of a portion of God's wondrous dealings with her, and her voluminous correspondence with himself.*

* This history, with that of Pere Charlevoix, forms the foundation of all the existing biographies of the Venerable Mother. Dom Claude Martin likewise published two volumes of her letters, the one the spiritual, the other the historical; her explanation of the Christian Doctrine ("Grand Catéchisme,") and her Retreats.

The Venerable Mother's work of zeal, though far advanced, was not completed. She had happily obtained the conversion of her son; when she had suffered more, she would be rewarded by that of her niece also, but not until then would her self-imposed task of charity be perfected. The niece alluded to had been from her birth a special object of her holy aunt's interest. The idol of her mother, no pains had been spared for the cultivation of her mind and the formation of her character; yet, notwithstanding all, she bade fair to turn out a frivolous worldling, unless arrested by Almighty grace. She was but fifteen when introduced to the gay circles of fashion, in which her personal attractions and brilliant accomplishments particularly fitted her to shine. Flattered at finding herself the object of general attention, she accepted the homage without pausing to weigh its sincerity, too dazzled by the glare of the world, too dizzy from the excitement of pleasure to be capable of discerning the serpent lurking among the flowers. A rude shock was to awaken her from her short, sweet dream.

Among the many claimants for her hand, one had resolved to secure the prize by stratagem, as he evidently could not hope to win it by persuasion. Accordingly, one day as she was going to Mass, he had her waylaid, forced into a carriage, and rapidly driven to his country seat, hoping much from the eloquence of a lady of his acquaintance whom he

For recent reprints of all we are indebted to the Abbé Richaudéau, a distinguished ecclesiastic of Blois. The Ursulines of Quebec possess, and prize as treasures, different articles once belonging to the son of their saintly Mother; among others, a silver reliquary containing a precious particle of the true Cross.

had engaged to meet her there and advocate his cause. Her mother very soon released her from her embarrassing position, but her difficulties were not yet over. On the death of that dear protectress, which occurred soon after, her unprincipled persecutor returned to the charge, although the law had taken cognizance of his first offence, and subjected him to well-merited penalties. The more effectually to gain his ends, he had recourse on this occasion to the intervention of the Duke of Orleans, whom he succeeded in persuading that the rich and beautiful heiress was his affianced bride, representing that the separation was as painful to her as to him, and earnestly begging an order for her restoration. Her guardian, clearly seeing that a convent alone could afford her a safe asylum, advised her to take refuge in one until the storm should have blown over. As this seemed the best thing to be done, she decided on applying for a temporary lodging at her dear aunt's old home, the Ursuline Monastery, in her native city of Tours. But even to this secluded abode persecution followed her, and at last thoroughly wearied out, she formed the dangerous resolution of embracing the religious state, rather to free herself from importunity, than with any wish to consecrate her life to God. No wonder that with her heart, and hopes and thoughts in the world, she should have been unable to appreciate, or even to discover the hidden happiness of her quiet cloistered home. No wonder that the days should have seemed long the observances wearisome, the duties monotonous, and uninteresting. But, oh ! the wondrous power of prayer which draws down grace from heaven to

refresh the soul, as the mountains attract the moisture-laden clouds to fertilize the earth ! Separated in person from the object of her holy affection, but closely united to her in God, the Mother of the Incarnation prayed without ceasing that grace might do its admirable work in her, through its own unsearchable ways. She prayed that the bitter lesson which life had early taught, might bear its abundant fruits ; that the desolate child might seek a balm in the Blood, and a home in the Heart of Jesus ; and that having learned by experience how different are the servitude of God and that of the world, she might cling to the one and loathe the other evermore—and the petition was fully granted.

When the time came for assuming the religious habit, the novice might well have doubted her own identity, so strangely and utterly was she changed. Illusion had vanished, and truth had triumphed. In laying aside the secular dress, she seemed to be in a moment mysteriously divested of the spirit of the world. Its imaginary attractions ceased to tempt, now that she could see them in their false colouring ; its deceitful promises ceased to allure, now that she could correctly interpret their hollowness and insincerity. And if her ideas of the world were changed, so likewise were her views of the religious life. Deeply appreciating the immense favour which God had conferred on her in calling her to it, she devoted herself heart and soul to all its duties, embracing its penitential rigours with holy eagerness, and making it her great aim to hide her good works from all but God. She pronounced her vows with a joy that was more of heaven than earth, and

would be named "Mary of the Incarnation," that, hearing herself called by the name of her aunt, she might be perpetually stimulated to imitate her virtues. She had the advantage of a constant correspondence with her, and after a most holy life, went to rejoin her in the blessed home to which the saintly Mother had long preceded her. In a letter of October, 1671, we meet the following words, the last ever addressed by the Venerable Mother to the beloved niece whom she had been the first to offer to God at her birth, and for whose salvation she had endured so much:—"Oh! how ardently I desire that you may become a saint, at the cost of any suffering or sacrifice to myself ! As my farewell, permit me to say to you in the words of our Lord, 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'"

After having borne her heavy interior crosses for seven years, with only partial and temporary alleviation, the Mother of the Incarnation was inspired to apply for relief to the Blessed Virgin. It was on the Feast of the Assumption, 1647. Hardly had the petition been presented, when it was granted. Suddenly she felt, she says, as if divested of a leaden garment, which had long oppressed her with its crushing weight, and on the arrival of the next vessel from Europe, she learned that the period of her emancipation from suffering exactly coincided with that of her niece's clothing in the convent at Tours. Her soul, she writes, overflowed with a peace which it would be impossible to describe in human language. Capable of understanding the advantages of tribulation, she blessed God with the Psalmist, that He had humbled her ; that He had led her through

the thorny ways of the cross, to a higher experimental knowledge of the sacred maxims of the Gospel, in which she found strength and support for her soul, not only under the pressure of spiritual trial, but amidst the multiplied difficulties and embarrassments which her arduous external duties entailed.

In order not to interrupt the history of the conversion of her niece, chronological order has been slightly anticipated. Retracing our steps a short distance, we meet some new names intermingled with those already so well known to us. The ever-growing eagerness both of French and Indians for instruction, and the continual increase in the number of applicants for it, had rendered more help indispensable. The harvest was greater than the few labourers could reap, so they appealed once more to France, which sent them Mother Anne of the Seraphim, from Ploërmel in Brittany, in 1643, and the Mothers Anne of St. Cecilia, and Anne of our Lady from Tours, the year following. The two first returned to France, the one after thirteen, the other after eleven years in Canada.

In 1645, we find the Venerable Mother relieved from the burden of Superiority, which consistently with the Constitutions of the Ursuline Order cannot be borne by the same individual for more than six consecutive years. This high position had been a heavy cross to her, not only on account of the responsibilities which it entailed, but also because its arduous duties left her comparatively little time for the occupation which she prized beyond all others, the instruction of the Indians. She was succeeded by Mother St. Athanasius, the two continuing

alternately to govern the community until death deprived them of the Venerable Mother.

The same year, according to the example of St. Teresa, she made a vow allowable only under very exceptional circumstances, to do, say, and think in all things whatever she considered most perfect, and most conducive to the glory of God, and so naturalized had she become by long habit to the practice of every virtue, that this vow never caused her an uneasiness. "Although I am but a poor sinful creature," she said, "God assists me to avoid every voluntary imperfection inconsistent with my promise. If involuntary faults mingle with the observance of it, I trust in His goodness to forgive them." She had at this time acquired that high degree of the habit of virtue, in which its acts are performed not only without pain, but with pleasure.

The first novice professed in Quebec was Charlotte Barré of St. Ignatius, the former companion of Madame de la Peltrie. She made her solemn vows on the 21st of November, 1648, and a few days after, her example was followed by Sister Catherine of St. Ursula, the first Canadian lay sister. Henceforth the little community continued gradually but steadily to increase in numbers.

From the first opening of the schools, the advantages of education had been extended to the French as well as to the Indians. Even in the small tenement which had served as a temporary convent, there were two French boarders; at the period now under consideration the number had increased to eighteen or twenty. That of the seminarists had amounted to eighty.

The year 1649 at which we have arrived, brings us to a tear-stained page in the annals of the infant Church of Canada. By a reference to the introductory chapter, it will be seen that this was the date of the massacre of the converted Hurons and their saintly pastors, by the savage Iroquois. The sad event afflicted every heart in the colony, but perhaps most of all, the hearts of the Venerable Mother and of the Mother St. Joseph. The survivors, who numbered only four or five hundred, took refuge in Quebec, where they were received with extreme kindness. Some were located on a portion of the Isle of Orleans belonging to the Ursulines, and generously transferred by them to the unhappy fugitives. To relieve their distress, the religious deprived themselves of a good part of the food and clothing which they could very badly spare. The Mother of the Incarnation admitted many of their daughters into the seminary, and undertook, though in her fiftieth year, to learn the Huron tongue, that she might be enabled to impart the blessing of spiritual instruction to the exiles. Her teacher was Father Bressani, who had almost miraculously escaped from the hands of the Iroquois, after having undergone the ordinary course of torture prescribed by savage cruelty. She and the Mother St. Joseph divided the charge of teaching these new pupils, who besides ample instruction, received also generous alms. It was at this time that bread was first seen to multiply in the hands of the Venerable Mother: with only two or three loaves to divide among fifty or sixty persons, it was found that every one had a sufficient share. She perceived the prodigy herself

and said quite simply, as she went on dividing the loaves, "I think our good God is multiplying this bread for His poor necessitous creatures." Even before this special demand on her charity, she had arranged that whatever might be their own distress, no Indian should ever be refused an alms at the monastery, and for this purpose, a supply of Indian meal porridge was always kept in readiness. Once, when she was Superior, a poor woman not satisfied with all she had already got, represented her great want of a pair of shoes in addition. Without the least discomposure at the unreasonable importunity, the charitable Mother took off her own and presented them to her, reserving for herself a very poor, slight pair, quite insufficient to protect her from the cold. The time was fast approaching, when she who had been ever ready to give her strength and life, and all else that she possessed for the relief of others, was to be reduced to the last degree of want, and left without even a shelter for her head !

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONFLAGRATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.— REBUILDING OF THE MONASTERY.

THE Ursulines had inhabited their new monastery seven years before it could be considered finished, a delay easily explained by their great poverty. They were absolutely dependent for their support on remittances from France, and these, besides being sent only once a year, were liable to many casualties on the way. When the annual arrival of the vessels

was unusually retarded, the inconveniences to the colony in general, and to the Nuns in particular, can be better imagined than described. What then must have been the distress of the Sisters, when as happened more than once, a ship was wrecked, or seized by pirates, so that they were obliged to wait another year for the very necessities of life! Then, when the remittances did arrive, charity had so many claims on them, and so many good reasons to urge in support of those claims, that but little remained to carry on the building.

At the cost of many and many a sacrifice, it had been completed at last, when on the memorable evening of December the 29th, 1650, the lay Sister in charge of the bakery, fearing that the bitter frost would injure her carefully prepared dough, thought to make all safe by placing a pan of hot coals in the bread trough, which she then carefully closed. To complete her imprudence, she forgot to remove the live coals as she had intended, before retiring to rest. The consequences may be anticipated. Towards midnight, the kueading trough ignited; the fire spread from the bakery to the cellars in which the year's provisions were stored, and thence along the whole lower story. The crackling of the flames, and the suffocation of the smoke providentially gave the alarm in time to save the lives, but the lives alone of all the inmates. Amidst the general terror and confusion, the Mother of the Incarnation retained her usual calm presence of mind. Seeing that any attempt to preserve the house would be vain, she directed her efforts to collect a few articles of clothing, but finding even this useless, she satisfied

herself with securing some papers of great importance to the community. While engaged in the hazardous service, she was literally surrounded by flames. The fire raged fiercely in the story under her ; it ran with fearful rapidity along the roof above her ; the church bell under which she had to pass was pouring down a stream of melted metal, and still she escaped unhurt, though nearly suffocated.

Meantime, the rescued household were assembled under the ash tree, so closely connected by tradition with her loved and venerated memory. All were there except one, but that one was the most precious of any. Had she perished,—she, the soul, the living model, the cherished Mother of the community ? Each longed, but none dared to ask the question. Almost breathless from anxiety, yet hoping against hope, the little crowd stood silently awaiting the issue. Happily their fears were soon dissipated ; good angels had folded their wings round the venerated Mother and screened her from the flames. Yes, it was she whom they saw advancing. Even if she had not been distinctly visible in the strong, clear light of the blazing house, they would have recognised her by that air of quiet self-possession which nothing could disturb ; that sweet serenity which nothing could ruffle. But what a sight for the tender-hearted Mother ! All the children both French and Indian were standing on the snow, barefooted, very scantily clad, shivering and trembling, and pressed close together for greater warmth. Madame de la Peltre, so frail, so delicately nurtured, so sensitive to cold, sharing their sufferings ; worst of all, the Mother Sister Joseph in her failing health, pierced through

by the biting air, and looking as if she would expire momentarily. It was a scene well calculated to display the virtue of the Mother of the Incarnation, which never shone out more brightly. The heroism of her resignation seemed even to pass into the hearts of her companions in affliction, who falling on their knees, returned thanks to God in the spirit of the martyrs for having been thought worthy of so bitter a trial. The spectators wondered, but the Mother afterwards explained the mystery; "He," she said, "who tried, strengthened and consoled us too." The night was calm, but intensely cold ; the sky brilliantly studded with stars. Showers of sparks poured from the burning building on the neighbouring forest, on the fort, and on the adjoining houses, menacing the town with destruction. But for a light breeze which providentially arose at the moment, and turned the course of the flames, it must have been consumed. Every effort had been made to arrest the conflagration ; the Jesuit Fathers in particular, had been vigorous and untiring, but when discovered, the fire had progressed too far to be checked. At imminent peril, the Blessed Sacrament and some of the sacred vestments were saved. In less than two hours, nothing remained of the monastery but the blackened walls. Clothing, provisions, furniture, all the earthly possessions of the Ursulines were gone.

With great kindness, the principal citizens offered hospitality to the children, while the Superior of the Jesuits conducted the Nuns to the convent of the Hospital Sisters, who opened not alone their doors, but their hearts to their desolate visitors, clothing them from their own wardrobes, placing the whole

house at their disposal, and retaining them for over three weeks as their prized and honoured guests. The day after the calamity, the Governor came to offer his condolence; but sweeter than all to the hearts of the sufferers, was a deputation, and an address of sympathy from the Hurons. Time was, when to use their own expression, the grateful chiefs would have covered the ashes of the monastery with presents, but alas! of their vanished glory nought remained but two wampum belts.* Such as they were, it was decided in solemn council that they should be presented to the bereaved Sisters. Accordingly the deputation arrived, and the Grand Chief delivered the oration, too long to be entirely inserted, but too beautiful in its simple language and genuine feeling to be entirely omitted. "Holy Virgins," he said; "you see before you the miserable remnant of a once flourishing, now extinct nation. The little left to us, we owe to you. Alas! the misfortune which has befallen you, renews our own woes, and re-opens the source of our only partially dried tears. When we saw the beautiful house of Jesus consumed in a moment before our eyes, the sad sight reminded us of the day when our own homes and hamlets were delivered up a prey to the flames, and our country reduced to a heap of ruins. Holy Virgins, you are then sharers in the misery of the poor Hurons, for whose melancholy fate you showed such tender pity. You too are left without house, home, provisions or help, except the help of

* *Wampum.* Small shells of various colours formerly used by the North American Indians as money, and strung like beads into broad ornamental belts.

that heaven to which your eyes are ever turned. If you belonged to our people, we should try to console you by two presents, one intended to dry your tears, the other to add new strength to your fortitude ; but we have not seen you shed one tear over your misfortune; neither we know have you buried your courage under the wreck of your fallen house. Surely it must be that your hearts are too fixed on the treasures of heaven, to value those of earth."

"Onething we fear, that when your friends in France hear of your distress, they will pray you so earnestly to return to them, that you will be unable to resist their entreaties, so we shall be in danger of losing you, and with you, the chance of instruction for our children. Have courage, holy Virgins, and prove that your love for the poor Indians is a heavenly love, stronger than that which binds you to your relatives. We offer you these two wampum belts, the one to attach you inviolably to our country ; the other to found anew a house for Jesus, where you can pray, and teach our children to do so too."

"We know you could not die happily, if at the last hour you had to reproach yourselves with having loved your friends so much as to give up for their sakes the souls once dear to you in God, and destined to be your eternal crown in heaven."

It cannot be doubted that the sympathy of the Hurons must have been very gratifying to the Mothers, and have tended to cement the already strong tie which bound them to Canada. But the tie was a Divine one, formed by, and wholly dependent on the will of God. "If the Almighty decreed that we should return to France," the Mother of the Incarna-

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tion wrote to her son, "I should go back with the same tranquillity as I came out. To go, or to stay, is a matter of indifference, provided only God be glorified." In describing the events of the terrible night of the 29th December, she tells him that looking on the disaster as the punishment of her sins, she accepted it with perfect equanimity, only wishing that the chastisement were confined to herself, since she alone deserved it, and beseeching God to spare her innocent Sisters. She says that amidst the horrors of the conflagration, she enjoyed most profound interior peace, undisturbed by a single emotion of regret, sadness, or uneasiness. That closely united in heart with the will of Him who had permitted the blow, she desired that it might be accepted by all in the spirit of the saints both of the Old and New law, who with humble and contrite hearts blessed God under the heaviest afflictions and severest temporal losses.

This imperturbable tranquillity was founded on her perfect confidence in God. Tracing all human events to His ordinance or permission, she sometimes wondered how it was that men should try to reject His hand when it sends adversity, and submit to it willingly only when it bestows prosperity, both being equally His gifts. The calmness of soul thus solidly grounded, must necessarily have been very steady but in addition, the Mother of the Incarnation had, as we know, received from God Himself a special, gift of His own Divine peace.

Unwilling to burden the charitable Hospital-Sisters longer, the Ursulines resolved at the end of three weeks, to take up their abode in a small house which

Madame de la Peltre had built for herself within their enclosure, and afterwards generously given them as a school for the Indians. Its dimensions were thirty feet by twenty, and it contained two rooms. Here, it was decided that thirteen Sisters and some boarders should live as best they could, and as the exclusion of converts seeking instruction was not to be dreamt of, the house was made to contain a grated parlour in addition to a chapel, school, refectory, kitchen and dormitory. It had need of an infirmary too, for in that abode of poverty, a well-beloved Sister was slowly wearing her life away, amidst inconceivable sufferings and privations.

It was then only the end of January, so that many months were still to elapse before help should come from France, but far from losing courage, the heroic Mothers rejoiced at finding themselves reduced to such utter indigence, as to be compelled to accept alms even from the poor, and so it happened that notwithstanding their own want, the poorest of their neighbours would bring them presents, one of a hen, another of a few eggs, a third of some trifling article of clothing. In their generous charity, the people not only shared with them all they could spare conveniently, but moreover encroached on absolute necessities. To complete the distress of the Sisters, the vessels were delayed, and when they did come, they brought but the usual supplies of provisions and clothing, the news of the disaster not having reached in time to secure an additional quantity. But God had not abandoned His own. The Ursulines possessed a small farm, which from want of cultivation, had hitherto yielded them no profit. Deeply touched by

their extreme poverty, their chaplain, Rev. M. Vignal, resolved to take it in hands, and not satisfied with merely superintending, he worked with the labourers, and more actively than any. The Almighty blessed the charity, and the land produced an abundant crop of wheat, barley and peas, which proved a valuable resource to the Sisters. This good priest was massacred by the Iroquois in 1661.

Meantime it had become evident to all interested in the success of the Nuns, that if they were to remain in Canada, they would have to re-build the convent. They had originally been of opinion, that with some additions, Madame de la Peltrie's house might be made to afford them sufficient accommodation, but on mature consideration, they determined to adopt the advice of their friends, and to trust to Providence for the means of carrying it out. They were offered a loan free of interest for six years, by the principal citizens headed by the Jesuits of the colony and the Governor, M. d' Ailleboust. The good Fathers who had already assisted them most liberally, promised the services of their lay brothers and workmen to help on the building. All this was encouraging. The snow had hardly melted away when the Nuns began to clear the rubbish from the foundations, and on the 19th of May, 1651, Madame de la Peltrie laid the first stone of the second monastery precisely on the site previously occupied by the first. The burden of care and responsibility again fell on the Venerable Mother, who as before, was charged with the superintendence of the work. While we wait for the completion of the new building, let us see how the Mothers contrived to carry on school work in

the interim. The glance will show us a pretty picture traced by the pen of one of their present descendants at the convent of Quebec, in her interesting History of the Monastery.

The number of pupils instead of diminishing, has increased, however in-door accommodation is scant as ever, so if we would assist at a lesson, we must be content with an academy of a primitive kind, and yet, after all, it is one which may well satisfy the most fastidious taste. For roof, it has the canopy of deep blue heaven ; for study halls, the lordly forest ; for carpet, a fairy web of wild flowers. Here and there, the sun is glancing through the dense foliage, and tinging his resting spots with gold. The ancient trees are looking glorious in their bright, spring clothing ; the soft breeze is singing its gentlest notes among the leaves ; all looks so fresh, so peaceful and so attractive in the sweet, cool shade, that we do not wonder to hear of numerous candidates for admission to the extemporized academy. In after times, traditional honours will attach to some of those venerable trees ; one in particular will be so often commemorated, that people will learn at last to look on it in the light of an old friend. Here it is ; the well-known ash tree,* under which, whenever she can quit her more pressing duties, we are sure to find the Mother Mary of the Incarnation surrounded by her dear Indian children, to whom

* This veteran of the wilderness remained standing until the 19th of June, 1850, when bending under age and honours, it fell to the ground. The wood has been carefully preserved for the sake of dear and old associations, and is used in making ornamental crosses, and similar small devotional articles, as memorials of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

with heavenly unction of "Him who made all things." How their dark eyes glisten, and their little hearts swell, while they catch each word of life as it falls from her lips to find an echo in their souls ! A few steps farther is the famous walnut tree, and here we meet a group of French pupils receiving the lessons of Mother St. Athanasius. At a future day, many of these will be found in the ranks of the Ursuline or Hospital-Sisters ; many more faithfully discharging their responsible duties as heads of families, presiding over Christian households, and training their children to virtue by word and example. Farther still, in the shadow of some ancient monarch of the woods, are bark huts occupied by the Neophytes, whom we find participating not only in the heavenly bread of God's word, but also in the small resources of their impoverished teachers. Many of these too, will do the work of apostles in a humble way among their own tribes. To crown the scene of beauty, the walls of the new monastery are visible in the distance, and like the olive branch in the deluge, they speak of hope.

Happily the hope was realized, and far more speedily too, than humanly speaking could have been anticipated. Exactly one year after the first stone had been laid, the new monastery was ready to receive its inmates. So triumphantly successful a termination to the arduous work, was due in great part to the extraordinary natural energy of the Mother of the Incarnation, but still more to the intervention of her celestial Assistant, the Help of Christians and Queen of heaven. On the 8th of September preceding the destruction of the first

monastery, the community had formally placed itself under the immediate patronage of that glorious Queen, choosing her with solemn ceremonial for its first and chief Superior. That she had graciously condescended to accept the charge, was clearly manifested by the fidelity with which she discharged the trust attaching to it. The marvellous rapidity which marked the erection of the new building, the preservation of the workmen from the slightest accident during its progress, and the almost total freedom of the community from debt at its completion, form a series of favours unhesitatingly ascribed by the Venerable Mother and the Sisters to the manifest protection of their "First Superior," the "Virgin most powerful, most merciful and most faithful."

The personal devotion of the Mother of the Incarnation to our Blessed Lady, dating from her earliest years, had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength. Her childhood's prayer had been that, even in this life, she might be permitted to see her dear Heavenly Mother, and, if the petition was not granted literally, it may at least be said to have been at this time answered substantially. She did not see the Blessed Virgin, she says, with her corporal eyes, but, from the commencement to the completion of the building, she had her as constantly and as vividly present to mind and heart as if she did. She felt her ever by her side, and in her company encountered hardships and dangers without fear. Long accustomed to recur to her in the emergencies of life, she transferred to her, if we may say so, the whole responsibility of the

present undertaking, referring to her and consulting her as its first and chief Directress. No wonder, then, that it should have been crowned with extraordinary success. "It was never known in any age, that those who had recourse to Mary were abandoned by her" (St. Bernard). The Venerable Mother, who from the dawn of reason had loved her and trusted in her, could not surely be the one to inaugurate a new experience! So far from it, that some years after the present date, we find her writing, in allusion to the favours of her heavenly Protectress, "Our Blessed Mother assists us in all our wants, and guards us as the apple of her eye. In her own sweet way, she watches over our interests, and relieves us in our embarrassments. We are indebted to her for having many times passed safely through overwhelming difficulties, and, among other benefits, for the rebuilding of our monastery after it had been totally destroyed by fire. What can I fear while shielded by protection at once so loving and so powerful?"

On the 19th of May, 1652, the Ursulines took possession of their second monastery. The great reputation which their schools enjoyed rendered the event one of general interest to all classes. Pleased at the opportunity of testifying their respect for the devoted Mothers, the inhabitants of Quebec determined to make the occasion one of great solemnity. Accordingly, the whole population, ecclesiastic and lay, assembled near the house of Madame de la Peltrie, and thence accompanied the Nuns to their new residence. The Most Adorable Sacrament was borne at the head of the long procession to the convent chapel;

the Forty Hours' prayer was at once commenced, and on each of the three days of its continuance, processions again went out from each of the churches in Quebec to the Ursuline chapel, the chant of the Litanies resounding all along the way. Well might the Mother of the Incarnation say that Divine Providence shows itself a good Mother to those who place their whole reliance on its aid.

About thirty years later, the second monastery, like the first, was consumed by fire, yet not wholly destroyed. The walls raised by the Mother of the Incarnation under the protection of the Queen of Heaven, withstood the flames, and after the lapse of more than two centuries, they are still standing. They form the central portion of the edifice yet known at this remote day as the Ursuline Convent of Quebec.

CHAPTER VII.

LAST ILLNESS AND HAPPY DEATH OF MOTHER ST. JOSEPH.

IN the procession to the new convent, one familiar face was missing: Mother St. Joseph, the first companion of the Mother of the Incarnation, was also the first of the little band called home to heaven. Her death and life were so consistent, that the one who knew her best, summed up her panegyric in two words—"She lived a saint, and she died one." She seemed, indeed, to have been specially privileged by Divine grace from her very infancy, manifesting

in early childhood an instinctive love of the beautiful virtue of the angels, and a singular attraction to the poor and afflicted. When only nine years of age she was sent, at her own request, to the Ursuline Convent at Tours, where she made her first Communion with extraordinary fervour. From the period of His first sacramental visit to her soul, our Blessed Lord continued to draw her irresistibly to Himself. Docile to His Divine call, she obtained the reluctant permission of her fond parents to consecrate herself wholly to Him, and at the early age of fourteen, exchanged her brilliant prospects as heiress of two noble houses, for the poverty, seclusion, and mortification of the religious life. Her choice fell on the monastery where she had been educated, and here it was her happiness to be placed under the guidance of the Mother of the Incarnation, at that time in charge of the novices. After the usual probation, she received the habit, and with it the name of St. Bernard, and in due time completed her first sacrifice by holy profession. She continued to edify her sisters by the example of virtues suited rather to a soul far advanced in religious perfection, than to one just touching the mysterious threshold ; and, as hers was one of those gifted natures pleasing both to God and man, she charmed and delighted her companions by her amiability and cheerfulness, as much as she edified them by her sanctity. Her great fear was, lest the attention and consideration by which she was surrounded, should prove any obstacle to her progress in perfection.

Some time after her profession she had a mysterious vision, in which the world was represented to

her under the symbol of a vast enclosure, abounding in all the delights which here below are wont to fascinate and captivate the hearts of men. She noticed that all who permitted themselves to be attracted too closely by the false glare were at once hopelessly entangled, as if a net had been cast around them, and among the unhappy victims she even recognised an acquaintance of her own. What terrified her most was, that having herself taken a few steps forward, and then, in great alarm, attempted to retreat, she found all means of egress closed, so that there appeared no alternative but to advance. As she was on the point of giving herself up for lost, she was attracted by the sight of a band of young persons arrayed in the costume of Canadian savages, the foremost of whom bore a banner inscribed with unknown characters, and she seemed to hear them say, "Fear not, Mary, for through us you will be saved." Then they formed into two lines, leaving a passage between them, through which she effected her escape in safety. It was not until her subsequent appointment to the Canadian Mission, that she understood the connection between this supernatural warning and her own destiny ; but, although the vision remained for a time unexplained, it served as a strong stimulus to her already ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, especially those of the savages. We have already noticed how manifest was the hand of God in her appointment as the companion of the Mother of the Incarnation to Canada, and we are, therefore, quite prepared to hear of great fruit from her labours in that country. The Almighty seemed, indeed, to have endowed her with

some singular attraction for the Indians, young and old. So great was their veneration for her, and, in consequence, so irresistible her influence over them, that the name of "Mary Joseph, the Holy Virgin," soon became a household word among the Hurons and Algonquins. Charity rendered her an eloquent pleader, and many and generous were the donations which at her prayer found their way from her old home in France, to the wigwams of her dear savages. To the end of life, her greatest earthly joy was to find herself surrounded by her beloved converts, forty or fifty of whom—men, women, and children—might constantly be seen gathered round her, listening to her words with rapt attention. If subsequent exhaustion had not revealed how much the effort had cost her, it might have been thought, when her sufferings became acute towards the end of life, that she had forgotten them in the pleasure of instructing her poor people. When the destruction of the monastery had reduced the inmates to utter destitution, her parents employed every argument to induce her to return to France. The Mothers at Tours joined in the request, but her invariable answer was, that she would rather share the coarse, scanty fare of the savages to the end of her life, or even die a thousand deaths, if that could be, than prove herself thus unfaithful to her vocation and ungenerous to her God.

Fidelity to her calling had been the watchword of her existence, and now that her time of merit had nearly run, no close observer could fail to see that this undeviating fidelity had produced rich fruits. To analyse her character as a religious, would be

simply to attribute to her every virtue which belongs to a perfect one. Our Lord once showed her her soul under the figure of a very beautiful and strongly-fortified castle, and He warned her to watch cautiously over its external approaches, promising that He would guard the interior of the edifice. In compliance with this direction, she resolved to surround the mystic castle with the deep trenches of humility, and so well did she succeed, that unfeigned contempt of self breathed at last in every act and thought of her life, inspiring a love and desire of humiliation which secured for those who tried her, the warmest gratitude of her heart, and the most devoted of her services. Not satisfied with mediocrity in any virtue, she carried mortification to an absorbing love of the cross; charity, to the sacrifice of every natural feeling; obedience, to child-like submission, spiritualized by faith; reverence for the rule, to most minute observance of its least prescription. She also attained an eminent degree of prayer and union with God.

For more than four years before her happy death, she had to endure the two-fold martyrdom of anguish of soul and great physical suffering. Yet while the wearing fever of prolonged consumption slowly undermined her life, so wonderfully did her great courage sustain her, that she seldom kept her bed, or relinquished her work. If sometimes compelled to yield to exhaustion and pain, she received the attention of her Sisters with so much humility and gratitude, that all felt it a happiness to render her any service. Far from complaining, she was confused when others showed compassion for her, and in return for their offers of kind offices, was always

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ready to remark that they themselves required indulgence more than she did. She learned at last to rejoice in the sufferings which she looked on as precious pledges of the love of her Divine Spouse, and that she should lose no part of her treasure, she desired to suffer without consolation or relief, indemnifying herself by practices of voluntary mortification for the occasional alleviations forced on her by charity. Towards the end, dropsy was added to her complicated maladies, and so, for the last two months, she was compelled to yield to the claims of utterly worn-out nature. Let us visit her in the humble lodging where those two closing months of life were passed, and we shall feel constrained to own, that the scene before us is one very grand and beautiful in the eyes of faith, whatever may be its aspect in those of the world.

She whose still young life is thus gradually ebbing away, might be now enjoying in her luxurious home all the comforts which wealth can purchase, but because she preferred the poverty of Jesus Christ to the treasures of earth, she is surrounded in lieu of them by unmistakable traces of abject indigence. Her bed of death is formed of one of the narrow wooden shelves which run in tiers all round the small apartment as a substitute for bedsteads, the highest reached by a ladder. Adjoining this common dormitory is the chapel, and as the one serves as a passage to the other, she is perpetually disturbed by the noise of the heavy wooden shoes, which since the conflagration, the whole family have been obliged to adopt for want of leather. Her wearying cough is irritated by the constant smoke of the ill-contrived

chimney ; her oppressed breathing additionally impeded by the closeness of the overcrowded room ; her rest interrupted by the voices of the pupils, the ringing of the bells, the chanting of the Office, and the various other sounds inevitable under existing circumstances. Far from murmuring, she will assure us that she is amused rather than inconvenienced by these unwonted surroundings of a sick room, and that she considers herself specially favoured in the opportunity which her position affords of assisting at the holy Mass, joining in the Office, hearing the sermons, and thus in some manner keeping up to the end the observances of common life.

For her final and more entire purification from the dross of earth, her all-merciful Father permitted that she should be afflicted with desolation of soul, such as with all her experience of it, she had never known before. To interior anguish was added the intensity of bodily pain, yet in her sharpest pangs, even when the surgeon's knife gashed her flesh, piercing to the bone, no sound betrayed her agonies, save once, a gentle invocation of the name of Jesus : for this impulse of nature as she considered it, she reproached herself as for a want of patience, and begged pardon as if it were a cause of disedification. Her sufferings reached their height in Holy week, and this coincidence she looked on as a particular privilege, thanking our Lord for thus associating her to His cross. To her visitors, she spoke only of the happiness of heaven, the riches of religious poverty, and the fidelity with which those who have embraced it, should cling to it for ever. "Tell all our friends in France," she said to her Sisters, "that I rejoice

in death at having left them for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and assure them that I feel myself infinitely privileged in having been called to this savage land." Our Lord did not permit His faithful servant to die in utter bereavement of spirit. For the three days before her end, she enjoyed a fore-taste of paradise ; her interior pains vanished ; her physical tortures were alleviated. "I know," she said to her director, Father Lalemant, "that our good God has promised a hundred-fold in this world, and eternal bliss in the next to those who renounce all things for His love. As to the hundred-fold, I have had it ; eternal happiness I hope through His infinite mercy soon to enjoy." She renewed her vows, asked pardon of the assistants, and returned thanks to the Rev. Father Ragueneau, Superior of the Missions, for his charity to their community especially since the conflagration. She also expressed her gratitude to the physician, for whom she promised to pray in heaven, and most of all to the Mother of the Incarnation, who had watched and tended her night and day with untiring care and love. She retained perfect consciousness during her long agony of twenty-four hours, and about eight o'clock on the evening of the Thursday in Easter week, April the 4th, 1652, her happy soul returned to the God who all through life had been the only Object of her love. The Mother of the Incarnation remarks, that the beauty of her countenance after death, appeared to her Sisters like a reflection of the glory of which she was already in possession, while the heavenly peace and unction which at the same time filled their own hearts, seemed to say, that over those remains no

tears should be shed, but tears of holy joy and gratitude. The impulse of each was to invoke her intercession, of which all very quickly experienced the power and efficacy. She was but thirty-six years of age, yet considering the frailty of her health, the wonder was that she had been able so long to resist the rigour of the climate and the privations attending the foundation of the monastery. Her remains were followed by the whole population both French and Indian, to their temporary resting-place in the garden of the convent, whence twelve years later they were transferred to the vault in the new church, which by that time was ready to receive the precious and venerated deposit.

As a mark of their respect and affection, the Hurons residing on the Isle of Orleans had a solemn service celebrated for her on the morning of her interment. The tradition of Quebec speaks touchingly of the gratitude of these poor children of the wilderness towards, their dear Mother St. Joseph, recording that they continually came to inquire for her in her illness, and brought her presents of every thing delicate which they could procure by the chase. "Here, Mother," they would say to the Mother of the Incarnation, "give these birds to Mary the holy virgin, that she may eat, and live to instruct us again."

The Almighty was pleased quickly to reveal the glory of His servant, as many trustworthy witnesses bore evidence. Among the first of these was a lay Sister at Tours, named Elizabeth, from whom Mother St. Joseph had received maternal care in her childhood. Almost at the hour of her decease, the Mother appeared to this Sister, bidding her prepare for the

great journey to eternity, on which she would soon be called to enter. Without the loss of a moment, the Sister informed the Superior that the Mother St. Joseph was dead, and had come to forewarn her of her own approaching end. In effect, she was summoned away in a few days, and later accounts from Canada fully corroborated the truth of the Sister's vision.

The Rev. Father Paul Ragueneau, Superior of the Missions at Quebec, testifies that about an hour after her venerated remains had been laid in the grave, Mother St. Joseph appeared in vision to a person bound on some errand of charity. Her air, he says, was full of majesty; her countenance resplendent with glory; rays of light seemed to pass from her eyes to his heart, as if she would thus have shown her desire to impart a share of her happiness to him. The effect of the vision was to fill his soul with Divine love and heavenly consolation in such abundance, that he felt as if without supernatural support, he must have died. On his return from his journey of charity, the Mother appeared to him again in the same glory as before, and revealed to him admirable secrets, which the Mother of the Incarnation who records the above fact, has not seen fit to disclose. Of the veracity of this witness also, there can be no doubt.

The same person having the next day to cross the frozen river, and not knowing that the ice was too thin to bear his weight, walked on for some distance unconscious of danger. Suddenly he heard a warning voice bidding him stop; then he looked round only to see himself surrounded on all sides by water.

The slight sheet of ice on which he stood, had no depth or solidity; it was a mere superficial crust floating on the surface of the terrible abyss. In an agony of terror, he recommended himself to the care of her who had arrested him on the way to destruction, then retraced his steps, and on reaching the river bank, perceived that he had actually walked for a considerable distance on water, as if it had been dry land. His first act was to relate the wonder to the Mother of the Incarnation, assuring her that he attributed his marvellous escape to the charity of Mother St. Joseph.

The love which this good Mother while on earth had shown for her neighbour, was assuredly not diminished in heaven, where charity is made perfect. That it survived the grave, was manifested in at least one singular instance, which occurred some years after the present date of our history. Among the captives whom Governor Tracy compelled the Iroquois to set free in 1666, was a young French girl named Anne Baillargeon, who had been made prisoner at the age of nine. So naturalized had she become to life in the woods, that when her companions in misfortune were about to return to their families, she refused to accompany them, and lest she should be constrained to do so, she concealed herself in the forest at the moment of their departure. Just as she was exulting at the supposed success of her stratagem, a lady wearing the religious dress suddenly stood before her, and in a tone which admitted of no reply, commanded her to rejoin the French, threatening her at the same time with punishment if she hesitated. Having no other alternative, she

reluctantly obeyed. When she arrived in Quebec, the Governor confided her to the care of the Ursulines. The moment she entered the house and saw the portrait of Mother St. Joseph, she exclaimed, "Ah, there she is! There is the person who spoke to me in the woods, even the dress is exactly the same." The exclamation convinced the witnesses of the strange scene that it was indeed Mother St. Joseph who had acted the part of guardian angel to the truant, and conducted her to the haven of safety.

CHAPTER VIII.

THREATENED INVASION OF THE IROQUOIS.—HEROES OF VILLE MARIE.

IN eighteen months after the destruction of the first monastery, the Ursulines were enabled to re-open schools for the French, and a seminary for the Indians, and so great was the increase of applicants for admission, especially to the latter, that the Mother of the Incarnation tells us she was obliged to her great regret to refuse many, who went away with tears in their eyes, leaving her, as she beautifully expresses it, with tears in her heart. The children who could not be accommodated in the school, were taught in the parlour, and a little later, bark cabins were again constructed in the neighbourhood of the old ash tree for the reception of the Huron girls, eighty of whom at a time might daily be seen receiving not only spiritual instruction, but also a plentiful meal of the never-failing Indian meal porridge. The seminarists resumed possession of the now vacant house of Madame de la Peltre.

The progress of God's work was partially checked about this time by the growing passion of the Indians for intoxicating drinks, and their increased facility for procuring them. The sad example of the parents was beginning to react on the children, and when the religious attempted to remonstrate with such of these as came only for occasional instruction, the refractory young ones took to flight. "It is their nature," the Mother of the Incarnation says, "to be easily led away by bad example, unless thoroughly confirmed in habits of virtue." The awful calamities which we shall meet later, led to a much-needed reformation. Among the resident Indian pupils, happily removed from the contagion of evil example, the labours of the zealous Mothers continued as ever to produce abundant fruit. Of the large number instructed by the Ursulines, it is true that only a comparatively small proportion were formed to European habits. "A Frenchman would more easily become a savage," remarks the Mother of the Incarnation, "than a savage a Frenchman." None of the Canadian tribes ever advanced beyond a sort of semi-civilization, and almost all passed away without attaining even this. But they made good Christians none the less—perhaps all the more—for if life in the woods debarred them from the advantages of civilized society, it secured them also from the dangers of its corrupting influence.

Among the contrasts which the seminary of this period presented were a widow advanced in years, and a little child only seven. Geneviève, the widow, was an Algonquin by birth, and though certainly not a candidate for school, she had so effectually

worked on the charity of the Mothers, that they found it impossible to refuse her request for admittance. Her fervour was most remarkable. She followed the nuns to every choir observance of the day, spending the time in reciting rosary after rosary for various intentions, among others, the conversion of the Algonquins. She was never tired of praying, or of listening to instructions on the mysteries of our holy faith. She was especially delighted with the choir ceremonies, of which she asked minute explanations, giving it as her opinion that they must be representations of what the angels and saints are doing in heaven. Her life-long grief was that her children had died without baptism. In the end, she left Quebec for Three Rivers, where an opportunity offered of doing practical good among the female converts of her own nation. Her little contemporary went to join the angels, and pray for her benefactresses in heaven. "Catherine is going to see Jesus and her Mother Mary," she would smilingly say to her companions when they came to visit her; "she is very happy, and she will pray for you." And so she was inconceivably happy to die in the house of Jesus and Mary, and in the arms of Madame de la Peltre, who watched her with a mother's love, and charged her with many a message for the angels, those especially of the Mothers and the Indians. Her sufferings were very great, but her patience was equal to them. After death, she was attired in white and laid in the church, where the savages came in crowds to pray around her bier. She was the last pupil to whom the venerated Foundress rendered the final services.

No Bishop had yet been appointed to govern the Church of Canada, ardently as it desired, and frequently as it had implored the blessing. At last, in 1659, the privilege was granted, to the universal joy of the colony. The first ruler of the infant Church was Monseigneur de Laval, who bore at first the title of Vicar Apostolic only. Of him it may, in truth, be said, that he was a man according to God's own heart, insensible to human respect, indefatigable in labour, detached from the world, dead to self, poor in spirit, a model of humility, and a consoling angel of charity. One of his first acts on the day of landing was to stand sponsor for a Huron infant; another, to administer the last sacred rites to a dying youth of the same nation. This was a worthy commencement of an episcopate destined to prove so fruitful in works of holiness and of general utility. The arrival of a vessel infected with fever, soon afforded him ample opportunity of signalizing his love for his neighbour. Of the two hundred persons whom it contained, nearly all had been attacked by the malady; eight had died on the passage; many more had been carried off after landing. The contagion spread through the town, and the hospital was quickly filled. The good Pastor was at all times to be found in the midst of his suffering people, ministering not only to their spiritual, but even to their corporal necessities. He who could trace his pedigree through a line of ancestors of the noble house of Montmorency, deemed it not a degradation, but an honour, to make the beds of the poor patients in the plague-stricken hospital at Quebec. No argument could induce him to think of his own

safety, for he had learned from the lessons and the example of his Divine Master, that the good shepherd must be ready to lay down his life, if needful, for his flock. In his establishment, and in his personal habits, he was a model of evangelical poverty, but where the rights of the Church and the dignity of his charge were concerned, he understood perfectly how to maintain both, and his desire and aim were ever to surround the ceremonial of religion with all the pomp and majesty attainable in a country only as yet in its infancy.

The late panic had scarcely subsided, when it was succeeded by another yet more terrible. In the spring of 1660, the inhabitants of the town were one day dispersed through the adjoining fields, peacefully engaged in agricultural pursuits, when suddenly the thrilling news arrived that twelve hundred Iroquois had assembled in the neighbourhood of Montreal, with the intention of utterly annihilating the colony. Their plan, it was said, was to begin with the capital, as the residence of the Governor, for they argued that the head once destroyed, the members would soon follow. It would be vain to attempt a description of the universal consternation occasioned by this intelligence. The first impulse of the trembling people was to try to propitiate heaven by public prayer; accordingly, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and devotions in honour of the Blessed Virgin were commenced. The Bishop, alarmed for the safety of the Nuns, removed the two communities from their own homes to lodgings near the Jesuits. The remaining inhabitants either fortified their dwellings or aban-

doned them for others more securely located. Meantime the monastery was placed in a state of siege; redoubts were raised; the windows walled half-way, and well supplied with loop-holes. Every aperture was carefully closed, and no entrance to the monastery left open except one narrow door, through which only a single person could pass at a time. Twenty-four men were placed on guard in the house, and, more formidable to the enemy than any soldiers, twelve enormous dogs were stationed on the outside. Woe to the Iroquois who should glide serpent-like through the tall grass, or lie in ambush in the shade of the brushwood! The sagacious animals would quickly detect his place of concealment, fly at him in a bound, and tear him to pieces without ceremony, a fact so well known to the hostile savages, that they feared the dogs of the French more than their warriors or their cannon.

Undismayed by the danger, the Mother of the Incarnation obtained permission to remain in the monastery with three other Sisters, to prevent disorder and see that the soldiers wanted for nothing. The first night passed over in safety, but to the inhabitants in general, it was one of mortal agony. The next morning after Mass, seeing that all was quiet, the Ursulines and their pupils returned to the convent. In the evening, they again sought their refuge of the night before, and so things went on for some weeks. It was a time of cruel suspense. Every sound was transformed by over-heated imagination into a signal of attack; every shadow into the form of some stealthy Iroquois; every breath of the night breeze into the echo of an enemy's approaching

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step. The vast, silent solitudes surrounding the town in every direction, the wild aspect of the unclaimed land, the gloomy appearance of the thickly wooded forest seemingly formed expressly to conceal a foe, all combined to impress the mind with that painful suspicion of unseen danger, which to many is more torturing than actual peril. Through all the agitation and alarm, the Mother of the Incarnation retained her accustomed self-possession, and by the calmness of her demeanour, encouraged the timid and desponding. During the five weeks' general excitement, she says that she experienced no fear, though she owns that she endured extreme fatigue. Sleep, either by day or night, was indeed a stranger to Quebec for the whole of that most trying period. As time passed on, and no enemy appeared, courage began to revive, but the dream of hope was soon dispelled. Once more the people were startled by the dread announcement, "The Iroquois are coming! They are close at hand!" While the imminence of the danger froze the life-blood in many a heart, it seemed, however, only to nerve the arms of the defenders of the town. In a half-an-hour every man was at his post, prepared to defend it to the last, and surrender it only with life. Some were even heard to wish in their enthusiasm, that the alarm might this time prove well founded. Notwithstanding the panic, confidence in God's providence had not deserted the inhabitants. "Mother," said one of the workmen to the Mother of the Incarnation, "do not imagine that the Almighty will permit the enemy to surprise us. No; He will hear the powerful prayers of the Blessed Virgin on our behalf, and

send some friendly Huron to put us on our guard in time. The Mother of God has never refused us this favour, nor will she now." The very next day proved the accuracy of the prediction. Two Huron prisoners who had miraculously escaped from the hands of the Iroquois, brought the almost incredible news that the enemy had precipitately retreated, humbled and confounded at the unexpected resistance which they had encountered. It was indeed true that the colony was saved, but equally so, that its safety had been dearly purchased.

The continual ravages of the Iroquois had hitherto been a standing obstacle to the progress of the young nation. Wherever they appeared, utter devastation followed, and as no precaution could prevent, and no foresight anticipate their incursions, life itself was felt by the inhabitants to hang merely on a thread. At length, sixteen of the colonists headed by an officer named Daulac,* resolved to confront the long dreaded foe, and conquer or die in the cause of faith and country. The determination was a bold one, and it was carried out with an unflinching spirit. Before setting out on their expedition, the Christian warriors approached the sacraments, and in presence of the holy altar promised never to surrender, and never to desert each other. They took leave of their friends as if assured of not meeting them on earth again, and having been joined by forty Hurons and six Algonquins with their respective Chiefs, they intrenched themselves on the first of May behind a half ruined palisade at Saut-des-Chaudières, on the Ottawa river. There for eight days they resisted an

* Sometimes written Dolard, and Daulard.

army of seven hundred Iroquois, enduring meantime the aggravating tortures of hunger, want of sleep, and worst of all, consuming thirst. Through the loop-holes of their little fort, they fired with unerring precision at the Iroquois, decimating them rapidly, while sustaining but trifling loss themselves. Even after the defection of twenty-four of the Hurons who were lured over to the enemy by deceitful promises, the small garrison still counted thirty-five undaunted hearts, and but for a sad accident, might have maintained its ground much longer. When the Iroquois had advanced sufficiently near the fort to render the attempt practicable, Daulac determined to attach a fuse to a barrel of gunpowder, and fling it into the midst of them. Unfortunately the missile caught in a branch, and was thrown back into the fort, exploding with disastrous consequences to the besieged. The savages taking advantage of the confusion, forced their way into the fort ;—one more desperate struggle,—then all was over. Only four Frenchmen and four Hurons fell alive into the hands of the Iroquois, who, terrified at a victory which had cost them so dearly, returned to their villages as fast as possible, not daring to carry out the projected invasion of a country of heroes such as these. Of the prisoners, some were put to a cruel death; two of the Hurons escaped as we have noticed, and were the first to bring to Quebec and Montreal the news of the death of Daulac and his brave companions.

In 1663, on his return from his first voyage to France, Monseigneur de Laval founded the seminary of Quebec, which he named the Holy Family of the

Foreign Missions. Like all great works, the beginnings of the institution were small, yet it was destined to exercise a vast and salutary influence over Canada, and at a later day to acquire wide renown as the famed Laval University.

CHAPTER IX.

TRADE IN INTOXICATING DRINKS.—AWFUL VISITATION OF DIVINE ANGER.—REPENTANCE.—NEW ERA OF PROSPERITY.—THE MARQUIS OF TRACY VICEROY.

IF association with Europeans had been in some respects a blessing to the Indians, it must be owned that in others it had proved very much the reverse. Among the numerous emigrants to Canada, were necessarily a large proportion of self-interested fortune seekers, who in order to secure a lucrative traffic with the natives, availed largely of their well-known propensity for strong drinks. The severest regulations, and the utmost vigilance of the authorities, though successful for a time, were powerless to repress the destructive trade permanently. After a short interruption, it was renewed, now clandestinely, now more openly, but as it seemed irrepressibly.

The savage in a state of intoxication becomes an ungovernable maniac, who in the violence of his fury will rush into any excess and commit any crime. At the epoch which our history has now reached, the terrible vice threatened to demoralize the entire country, and to destroy the fruit of all the efforts made to convert the savages. Writing to her son on the subject, the Mother of the Incarnation says,

"We have at present to contend with an evil far more calamitous in its results, than even the hostility of the Iroquois. It is unhappily but too true, that this country now harbours Frenchmen, who for their own selfish ends deliberately risk the spiritual ruin of the Indians, giving them in exchange for their beaver skins, those intoxicating liquors which are the absolute destruction of men, women, and even children." "To satisfy this insane craving for drink," Father Lalemant adds, "the savage will reduce himself to beggary; nay, will sell his own children. My ink is not dark enough," he continues, "to describe in their true colours, the calamities thus entailed on this infant church; the gall of the dragon would be more appropriate for the purpose. Suffice it to say, that in one month, we lose the fruit of our labours of ten or twenty years."

After every means of persuasion had been exhausted, a sentence of excommunication was at last pronounced against all who persevered in trading in the prohibited article, but not even the thunders of the Church could intimidate the hardened transgressors, and so the evil continued undiminished. Profoundly afflicted at so daring an insult to the Most High, and so fatal an interruption to the work of grace among the Indians, all the servants of God in Canada united in earnest prayer for the repentance of the sinful, but from no heart did the petition for mercy ascend more fervently or more continuously, than from that of the Mother of the Incarnation, who not content with simply imploring the conversion of the people, offered herself as a victim for their transgressions, consenting to assume the responsi-

bility of their crimes, and to endure the punishment which they merited. The prayer of charity was heard, but if the Almighty condescended to arouse His people to a sense of their iniquity, it was not without a very awful manifestation of His power.

During the autumn of 1662, such extraordinary signs had from time to time been seen in the air, that the more thoughtful were impressed with a vague fear of impending calamities, while even the least serious were not altogether unmoved. These horrors, however, were but faint foreshadowings of those to come. The evening of Shrove Monday, February the 5th, 1663, was calm and serene; no eye however keen, no ear however sensitive could have detected sight or sound indicative of the approaching catastrophe. Forgetful of past warnings, and undisturbed by present misgivings, the unreflecting crowd plunged into the exciting pleasures of gay carnival. About half-past five o'clock, the town was alarmed by a distant rumbling, such as might be produced by the rapid passage of a number of carriages over a stone pavement. This unnatural sound was followed by another, and a louder, which seemed to combine the crackling of flames, the rattling of hailstones, the muttering of thunder and the dashing of the waves on the sea shore. Clouds of thick dust obscured the air; the earth trembled, rose, fell, undulated like the billows of the ocean, and burst open in innumerable places. The trees of the old forest swayed back and forwards like reeds in a hurricane, and were uprooted by hundreds. Entire forests were in some instances swallowed by the yawning abyss, so that only the tops of a few trees

could be seen. Mountains were torn from their beds; rocks were rent, and enormous blocks of stone rolled into the valleys, crushing all before them. The houses were shaken to the foundation, and tottered as though they would have fallen; the walls were split asunder, the floors gave way, the doors opened or closed violently without being touched. The church bells, set in motion by the swaying of the belfries, tolled mournfully to the accompaniment of the wild cries of terrified animals and the shrill screams of equally frightened children. The convulsion of the water was not less fearful than that of the land. The ice, five or six feet in depth, burst with a crash like the roar of cannon; huge blocks were shot up into the air, and fell again to the earth, shivered into powder, while from the openings, clouds of smoke or jets of mud and sand were projected to a great height. The fish darted in terror from the turbulent waters, and it was noticed that one species, abandoning its usual haunts, made its way to a lake where it had never been seen before. The springs were either choked, or impregnated with sulphur. The waters of some of the rivers became red, others yellow; the St. Lawrence as far as Tadoussac appeared white.

Stunned by the suddenness of the calamity, and utterly unable to comprehend it, some thought that a fire had broken out, and ran for help; others that the Indians had made an incursion, and flew to arms, but soon the momentarily increasing violence of the shocks led to the universal conclusion that the end of the world had come. The consternation both of French and Indians can hardly be imagined. The

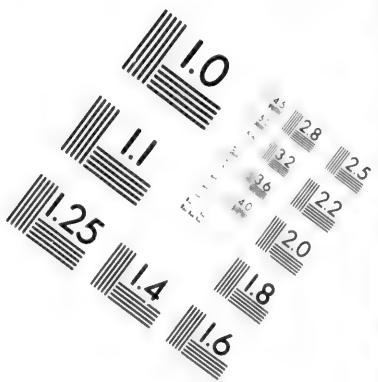
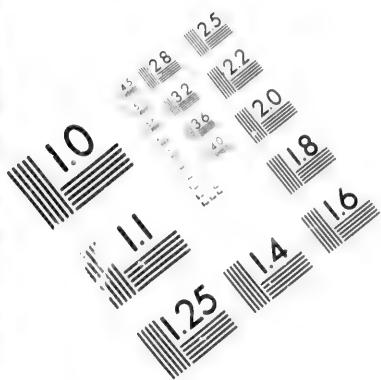
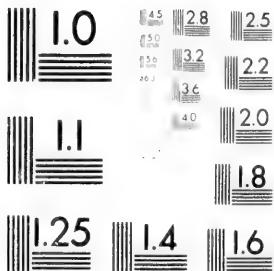
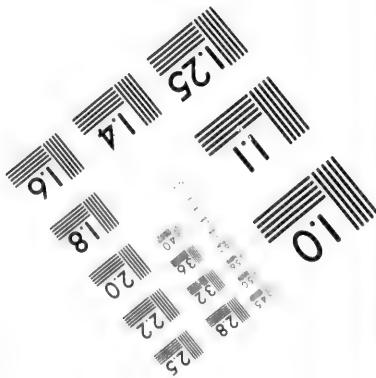
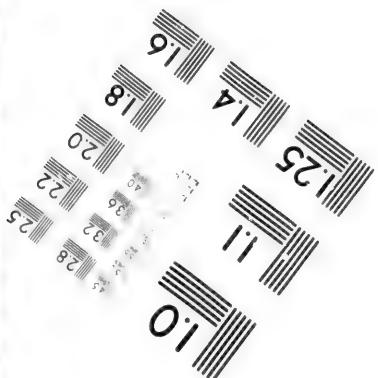


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general impulse was to hasten to the churches, and prepare to appear before the judgment seat of God, and truly wonderful were the conversions which ensued: a missioner afterwards told the Mother of the Incarnation, that he had himself heard eight hundred general confessions at that period of panic. After a half-an-hour, the oscillations of the earth became fainter, without however wholly ceasing, but about eight o'clock there was a second shock so severe, that the Sisters who were at the time standing in their stalls chanting the Office, were all thrown to the ground. The earthquake continued at intervals for a full year, the first five months in its original force, the remainder of the period with less violence. Sometimes the motion of the earth was like the pitching of a large vessel dragging heavily at its anchors; at others, it was hurried and irregular, creating sudden, and occasionally very violent jerks, but in general it was merely tremulous. During all that time, men lived in constant dread of immediate death, and actually withered away from fear. The Lent was spent by the Sisters in redoubled austerities and increasing prayers to appease the anger of God. "Every evening," the Mother of the Incarnation wrote to her son, "we disposed ourselves to be engulphed in the yawning earth before morning, and when a new day dawned, we prepared to stand in God's presence before its close."

After the fearful convulsion of nature had at last ceased, its terrible traces were but too distinctly visible over the entire country. In some parts, mountains had disappeared, swallowed by the gaping earth, or precipitated into adjacent rivers, leaving

vast chasms in the places which they had occupied ; in others, new ones had suddenly arisen. Lakes were to be seen in localities previously occupied by forests. A new island had sprung up in the St. Lawrence ; volcanic craters had burst open ; some rivers had been turned from their course, others totally lost. A rocky mountainous district of three hundred miles in extent, had been levelled as if some mighty harrow had passed over it. The earthquake seems to have extended more than six hundred miles in length, and about three hundred in breadth ; thus one hundred and eighty thousand square miles of land were convulsed at the same moment. A most singular circumstance connected with the awful visitation is, that not a single individual perished, or was even slightly injured.

At last, Almighty wrath was appeased ; salutary fear of the Divine judgments had done its work, and so the avenging angel was permitted to sheathe his fiery sword. The restored serenity of nature seemed emblematic of the recovered peace of the people, who, in their reconciliation with God, and their resolution of amendment, had adopted the most effectual security against a repetition of the late disasters. Their return to duty seemed the signal of a new era of benediction.

In 1663, the Marquis of Tracy was nominated Viceroy, and as no arrangement could possibly have been more advantageous to Canada at that particular crisis, the news of his appointment was received with an enthusiasm equalled only by that which at a later period greeted his arrival. He had for many years occupied a very high position in the

French army, and had been equally distinguished through life for courage in danger, and prudence in negotiation. His commission obliging him in the first place to re-establish the authority of France in Cayenne, which had leagued with the Dutch, and then to restore order in the French Antilles, he did not land at Quebec until the 30th of June, 1665. If he had chosen the season expressly with a view to first favourable impressions, the selection could not have been more judicious. Nature was then looking her loveliest. On the old time-honoured rock stood the little capital, in the first flush of its youth, like clinging childhood beside protecting age. Scattered over the height were the houses of the French, intermingled with religious edifices of sufficiently imposing appearance, the whole crowned by the romantically-situated Castle of St. Louis. Here and there a solitary Indian wigwam nestled among the trees; the glorious river flashed and sparkled in the morning light; the grand old woods towered in the background, looking like links between the past, with its solemn memories, and the present, with its hopes so bright and fair. With all its variety of picturesque contrasts, Quebec must certainly have presented a striking scene on that lovely summer's day when the Marquis of Tracy saw it for the first time.

Charmed with the country, and profoundly interested in the inhabitants, he entered on his functions with an ardour and energy which augured well for his success. His sole ambition from the very first was to promote the happiness of the people over whom he was called to rule, and whom he loved with

the tenderness of a father. The poorest savages were as much the objects of his paternal solicitude, as the highest dignitaries among the French. He listened to their harangues with the kindest interest, and accepted their little presents with the most amiable condescension. The King had assigned four companies of the regiment of Carignan for his body-guard, and, to the colonists unaccustomed to the sight of regular troops, they formed a splendid spectacle. As to the Indians, they had never even imagined anything so grand.

One of the first objects of the Viceroy was the effectual repression of the audacious Iroquois, who, though sorely humbled by the glorious feat of the heroes of Ville Marie, continued to disturb the colony to the utmost extent of their power, and still proved an insuperable obstacle to its steady progress. The harvest could not be gathered in safety; life was yet insecure, and there were times of particular alarm, when the more timid entertained serious notions of returning permanently to France. There was, however, strong reason to hope that as consternation had once been created in the ranks of the savages by a mere handful of resolute champions, they would now be thoroughly and effectually intimidated by a force comprising not only all the brave spirits of the colony, but also the brilliant guard of the Marquis of Tracy. A resolution was accordingly taken to proceed from defensive to aggressive measures, and attack the enemy in the heart of his own territory. The expedition was unavoidably delayed until September, 1666. The pious commander chose the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross for the day

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of its departure, and the brave warriors secured the protection of the God of Armies by approaching the Holy Sacraments. Although advanced in years, the Viceroy would take the personal direction of his troops in this most perilous and arduous journey of four hundred and fifty miles, carrying on his shoulders, like the meanest soldier, his arms, provisions, and baggage. The savages were panic-stricken at the sight of so large an army; the brilliant uniforms, the colours, the martial music, above all the rolling of the drums, inspired them with such extreme terror that they fled without striking a blow. Their four large villages at once fell a prey to the invaders, who reduced them to ashes, in order to compel the owners to sue for peace. The enormous quantity of Indian meal found in these hamlets would have sufficed to support the colony for two years if it could have been removed. Besides abundance of provisions, the cabins contained a variety of articles of furniture scarcely to have been looked for in the huts of savages. The next day, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered on the spot in thanksgiving for the bloodless victory, the ceremonial closing by a solemn *Te Deum*. From the departure of the army until the news of its triumph, the Forty Hours' prayer had been continued without intermission at the Ursuline monastery, and in private families as well as in the public churches, unceasing supplications had been offered to God for the success of the French arms. Dreading the annihilation of their tribe, the Iroquois were only too happy to sue for peace, and willingly gave up several of their families

as hostages.* At their own request, three Jesuits were sent to reside among them, and then each day witnessed some new conversions. Their famous chief, Garakontié, was baptized and confirmed in the cathedral of Quebec by Monseigneur Laval, whom he humbly thanked after the ceremony for having opened to him the doors of the Church and of Paradise. Finding the surroundings of their pagan homes a great obstacle to the practice of their holy faith, the new Christians determined to establish themselves among the French, where they could serve God in peace. To meet their wishes, the Jesuits prepared a residence for them on the rich prairie of the Madeleine, situated on the south bank of the St. Lawrence, nearly opposite Montreal. The indispensable condition of admission was a solemn promise to avoid intemperance. This mission of St. Francis Xavier-du-Sault was afterwards celebrated for the number and fervour of its converts, and became the nucleus of the Iroquois colony, destined later on to play an important part in the affairs of the Canadian nation.

After having given a decided and permanent impulse to the prosperity of the country, and in all respects faithfully fulfilled his mission, the Marquis of Tracy was honourably recalled to France, but he never lost his interest in the welfare of Canada. His departure was regretted by all parties in the colony, and not least by the Ursulines, to whom he had shown himself a devoted and efficient friend. "This young church will sustain an indescribable

* The restoration of Aune Baillargeon, already noticed in our little sketch of Mother St. Joseph, belongs to this period.

loss in him," wrote the Mother of the Incarnation. "Had it nothing else to be grateful for, his example alone was a priceless blessing. He has been seen to spend six consecutive hours in the church, where his very appearance was in itself a striking lesson. He is truly a model of piety and virtue, and so greatly is he beloved that his influence is irresistible." Fortunately for Canada, he left after him two men thoroughly imbued with his own spirit—Monsieur de Courcelles, the Governor, and the celebrated Intendant, Talon, under whose joint administration the country made more progress than since its first colonization. Thus it happened that from its founder, Champlain, onwards, Canada had hitherto been greatly blessed in its rulers.

Before we close this chapter, we shall take a glance at Quebec as it was in 1670, three years after the departure of the Marquis of Tracy, when we shall find it much altered since we saw it first at the arrival of the Mother of the Incarnation. Its scanty population has swelled to upwards of four thousand. The scattered huts which constituted the town, have been replaced by comfortable dwellings. Churches and convents have sprung up. Manufactures of serge and of hempen cloth have been introduced. A market, a brewery, and a tannery have been opened. The ground has been considerably cleared, and the agricultural resources of the country have been developed; three-fourths of the inhabitants can now live on the produce of the land, merely at the cost of their own labour. Commercial relations have been established with France and the West Indian islands. The cod fishery of

Newfoundland promises to become a source of immense revenue. Mines of lead, slate, and coal have been discovered near Montreal. Money, once so scarce, has become abundant since the arrival of the Marquis of Tracy and his suite.* "Merchants

* It is interesting to renew the glance something about two hundred years later, and note time's work. The Quebec of to-day consists of an upper and a lower town. The former, standing on that side of Cape Diamond which slopes towards the river St. Charles, contains the principal public buildings, the dwellings of the wealthy, and the best shops; the latter, extending for two or three miles on a narrow strip of land between the St. Lawrence and the cliffs, is densely crowded with stores, merchants' offices, warehouses and inns. The communication between the two is by a winding street and steep flights of steps, at the top of which is a fortified gate. No scene can be more imposing than Quebec and its surroundings, as it first breaks on a traveller sailing up the river. Nothing of the city is visible until the spectator has reached a line between the west coast of the Isle of Orleans and Point Levi, and then all the beauties of the magnificent scene burst suddenly on his view. The Isle of Orleans is fertile, well cultivated, and in the centre well wooded. Point Levi is a large, picturesque village, with brightly-painted cottages, and a romantic little church. From these, the eye turns to the abrupt promontory, three hundred and fifty feet in height, crested by the city and battlements of Quebec. The impregnable citadel, the dense mass of buildings, the bright tinned steeples of the churches and roofs of the houses, the fleets of ships at the quays, the vessels on the stocks or being launched, the steamers plying in every direction, the multitude of boats of every shape, the Indian wigwams at Point Levi, the vast rafts floating down the St. Lawrence with their cargo of timber from the forests of the Ottawa; farther on, the cataract of Montmorenci tumbling into the St. Lawrence over a ledge of rock two hundred and twenty feet in height; the houses, churches and woods of Beauport and Charlesbourg; the high grounds, spire, and homesteads of St. Joseph; the miles of richly cultivated country, terminating in a ridge of mountains—all form a picture which once seen can never be forgotten. The vast, grand landscape is, in fact, one of the most striking in the Old World or the New.—*Chiefly from Martin's British Colonies.*

will now find this country a high road to fortune," says the Mother of the Incarnation, from whose letters we have borrowed the above details. "As for us," adds the saintly Mother, "*our fortune is made*; we are the portion of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is ours; the only wealth we covet is the possession of Himself, and this we can secure by observing our holy rule, and faithfully accomplishing His blessed will. Ask His Divine Majesty to give us grace to do so."

Cheering as was the Venerable Mother's account of Canada, all, however, was not sunshine. At one time we hear of a fearful storm, attended by immense loss of property; at another, of a pestilential fever brought to the town by foreign vessels. One winter was so rigorous, that many of the Sisters made up their minds to be frozen; a later one was, if possible, still more severe. "During the last thirty-one years," remarks the Mother, "we certainly have had time to forget the comforts of our old homes in France." She might have added, with perfect truth, that their generous spirits were as indifferent to the privations of the new home, as they were detached from the luxuries of the old.

It was in the year of which we write, 1670, that Quebec was elevated to the dignity of a Bishopric.

CHAPTER X.

LINGERING ILLNESS OF THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATION.—LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH OF MADAME DE LA PELTRIE.

IN 1670, the original little community of three, had multiplied to twenty, but if its numbers had increased, so had its work. Once more, then, it became necessary to call on France for help, and once more the appeal was cordially responded to by two Sisters from the convent at Paris, and two from that of Bourges, who arrived in the spring of the next year. Of the three first pillars of the edifice, one had disappeared ; the two remaining were, alas ! soon to follow. Dom Claude Martin prefaches his notice of the long illness which preceded the death of his saintly Mother by the remark, that no cross is more holy or more meritorious than that which God Himself imposes. Crosses of our own choice, he says, are, no doubt, agreeable to Him, when borne with love and patience, but there is danger that self-will may mingle with them and diminish their value ; and again, they are not likely to be always judiciously chosen. But there is nothing to fear in crosses of Providence ; they bear the stamp of the will of God alone, and, as He never permits His creatures to be tempted beyond their strength, He either sends light trials suitable to their weakness, or with the heavier ones, strength in proportion. Sickness being among the precious crosses of Providence, it was not to be expected that the Mother of the Incarnation should have been exempted from it, and thus

deprived of the opportunity of increasing her patience and fortifying her other virtues. As far back as 1664, she had received her remote summons to her eternal home. A complication of violent maladies then brought her apparently so near death, that she received the last sacraments amidst the sighs and tears of her loving children. The news of her illness plunged the whole city into mourning; each family felt as if it were about to lose a mother, and day and night heaven was besieged by one uninterrupted supplication that she might be spared yet longer. Finding that remedies only aggravated her excruciating sufferings, the physicians determined at last to leave her in the hands of God, whose will it seemed to be that the remainder of her life should be passed on the cross. That life of crucifixion was destined to endure eight weary years, from the first date of her illness, before the dawn of the eternal day should at last dispel the long night of pain and sorrow. "I cannot shake off the effects of my severe sickness," she wrote to her son, "and I still find them very trying, although nature has now become familiarized with suffering. But I am happy under my cross, because the cross was the chosen portion of Jesus. Viewed in the light of God, my trials are so welcome, that my only apprehension is lest I should constrain our Lord to chastise my infidelities by removing, or at least, diminishing them. Some say that it is excess of work which has undermined my health, but I maintain with more truth, that my illness is a precious pledge of the love of my God, for which I heartily thank Him." She was perfectly indifferent as to the result of her malady, desiring, as she

said, neither life nor death, but only the God of life and death. During six of these years of lingering malady, she bore the weight of authority for the third time, her Director, who understood the blessing of her government to the community, having opposed her request for permission to resign it. That she could even exist in the state of exhaustion and emaciation to which she was reduced, seemed a miracle, yet she fulfilled all the duties of each day most punctually; she allowed herself no additional rest, rising as usual summer and winter at four o'clock; she assisted at all the observances, applied unremittingly to the functions of her charge; wrote an amazing number of letters, and when fatigue or weakness incapacitated her from more laborious business, she occupied her leisure in painting or embroidery, for both of which she had an exquisite taste. The fruit of her beautiful work in this way went to adorn altars and churches. Burning with zeal for the salvation of the Indians, and wishing in a manner to prolong her apostolate among them after death, she devoted herself untiringly to the preparation of the younger Sisters destined to succeed her in the charge of instructing them. In the winter mornings, she assembled them round her to teach them the Indian dialects, and knowing from experience the difficulty of committing the vocabularies to memory, she determined to leave them as much help from manuscripts as possible. Accordingly, between the commencement of the Lent of 1668, and the feast of the following Ascension, she accomplished the writing of a large volume of sacred history in Algonquin, and a dictionary and catechism in Iroquois. The preceding

year she had written a voluminous Algonquin dictionary.

Four or five years before her end, she wrote to her son, "When you receive the news of my demise, I beg you to get as many Masses as possible said for me by the Reverend Fathers of your holy Congregation. To all appearance, I have not, it is true, any immediate prospect of death, but at my age, the end cannot be far off. My infirmities, too, are a perpetual warning to keep myself ever prepared to render an account of my life, especially of the misuse of great graces, for which I shall suffer long in the fire of Purgatory, unless powerfully succoured by the suffrages of the Church. I am very fortunate in being able to calculate on your help and that of your good Fathers, hoping that through your united sacrifices I shall the sooner behold Him whom my heart and soul long to bless and praise for ever. Oh! how happy shall we be when this has become our sole employment! It is now forty years since by an immense favour God called me to praise Him on earth, as the angels and saints praise Him in heaven. This favour has been the source of great and magnificent graces to my soul, but there can be no doubt that, owing to my imperfections and distractions, something of my own spirit has mingled with those Divine praises, hence I continually say, "Who can understand sin? From my secret sins, cleanse me, O Lord" (Ps. xviii. 13). I have not only numerous external defects, but a vast number besides of hidden and internal, for all of which I shall be rigorously punished, unless you obtain my pardon through the Holy Sacrifice. The purity which God requires of a

soul elevated to a close and constant union with his Adorable Majesty, is infinitely precious, and it is the high standard at which I estimate it, which renders me fearful, but underlying the fear is a peace profound beyond words to describe. Pray that this peace may be solid, because in the spiritual life, there is much false peace. I have boundless confidence in the adorable Blood of our Divine Saviour, bequeathed by Him as a rich and permanent legacy to His Church."

But after all, the Mother of the Incarnation was not to be the next of the three foundation-stones removed to the Heavenly Jerusalem. In the designs of God, Madame de la Peltrie was to precede her; the interval between both deaths, however, was to be very short, so that the hearts united in life, should not be long divided after its close. Five months only before the Mother of the Incarnation, the gentle, pious Foundress was called away, after a violent and short attack of pleurisy. The main points of her history, both before and after her vocation to the foreign mission, are already known to us; the hidden virtues of her obscure life in Canada are less easily discerned. Humility and zeal for God's glory seem to have been the characteristics of her sanctity. The meanest offices were those for which alone she felt herself qualified, and which, therefore, she was not only ever ready to embrace, but to plead for. During eighteen years, she had charge of the general clothing, and the only drawback to her enjoyment of the duty was that the articles she could provide were not as good as she would have wished. For herself were reserved the old patched

garments too bad for anyone else. The last place in the choir and refectory was the one which she selected. She could not bear to be addressed as the Foundress, saying that she was a worthless creature who did nothing but offend God. Never was she heard to speak of herself, except to deprecate her own merit. She followed the common rule with regard to food and rising, except, indeed, that she often anticipated the hour of the latter, early as it was. Although she had received the gift of uninterrupted prayer, and could speak admirably to seculars who applied to her for advice, among the religious she never touched on spiritual subjects, fearing to appear better than she believed herself to be. Frail and weakly as her health was, she practised austerities which would have tried persons of robust constitution, redoubling them whenever she heard that some particular soul was in unusual danger, and therefore required unusual help. Honouring our Lord in the indigent, she was never so pleased as when she could clothe and console the poor. Of her love for the Indian pupils, we have more than once had occasion to speak, but it would be difficult to do it justice. She seemed to feel that she never could do enough not only to serve, but even to please and gratify her dear children. It was her delight to see herself surrounded by them, to receive and return their caresses, to head their processions, lead them on pious pilgrimages, and even give them little excursions for amusement. The means of carrying out her projects of charity often failed, but the charity never, so it was often said that if her pecuniary resources were only as large as her heart, all the Indian children,

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and their parents too, would be well provided for. Inseparably united in heart to Jesus in His most adorable Sacrament, she found her sweetest earthly happiness in Holy Communion, and made it her practice to procure as many Masses as possible for the convent, assisting at them all with the respect and fervour of an angel. Her great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament inspired her with a desire to build a church adjoining the monastery, in which she happily succeeded. The foundation-stone was laid in 1656, and two years and a half later the sacred edifice was completed.

Her death sickness lasted but seven days, yet short as was the interval, it sufficed to exhibit her virtues in all their lustre. In death, even more if possible than in life, she showed herself humble, affable, patient, obedient, mortified, united to God, and resigned to His holy will. In death too, she clung with all her old love to the evangelical poverty which had long had irresistible charms for her, for the sake of Him who became poor, that we might be enriched. Seeing near her bed a few delicacies which the hand of affection had provided, she had them immediately removed, saying that dainties were inconsistent with poverty. It would indeed have been difficult to detect anything incompatible with poverty in the humble room where lay expiring the once envied heiress of large possessions. A poor bed, two straw chairs and a wooden table constituted all the furniture; a picture of the Crucifixion, the only ornament. When asked if she regretted life, she answered that the day of her death was more precious to her than all the years of

her existence united. The day which proved her last, happened to be Wednesday, a coincidence which filled her heart with joy. "Oh ! how happy I should be," she said, "if God called me on this day, dedicated to St. Joseph !" Every hour seemed to her like a year, so vehement was her desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. She continually asked how soon she might expect the blissful moment which would unite her to her Sovereign Good for ever, and she begged the loving Sisters who surrounded her bed, constantly to whisper to her the words of the Psalmist, "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me : we shall go into the house of the Lord." (Ps. cxxi. 1.) She gently expired at eight o'clock on the evening of November the 12th, 1671, aged sixty-eight years, thirty-two of which she had passed in Canada. Her interment was attended by all persons of position in the city and its environs. Considering herself unworthy to inhabit the monastery which she had founded, she had begged as an alms a last resting-place in the vault destined for the religious. Contrary to her intentions, her remains were inclosed in a leaden coffin. By her own directions, her heart was buried under the altar step of the Jesuits' Church, that it might crumble into its original dust at the feet of the God of the Tabernacle, a holocaust of His love.

CHAPTER XI.

LAST ILLNESS AND HAPPY DEATH OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION.

In the middle of the January following the death of the venerated Foundress, the Mother of the Incarnation relapsed into violent illness. Her previous symptoms re-appeared, with the addition of indescribably painful tumors in both sides. Unable to rest in any position, consumed with fever, tortured in every nerve, not a sigh, or moan, or movement betrayed her agonies, and yet, at that moment, the hand of God pressed heavily on her soul as well as on her body. That she might resemble Him to the end, her crucified Lord presented her once more with the bitter cup of interior dereliction which she had so often before shared with Him, again despoiling the inferior part of the soul of those heavenly consolations which would so greatly have lightened the pressure of physical suffering. "It is hard," the "Imitation of Christ" says, "to want all comfort, human and Divine," but the Venerable Mother was well familiarized with the privation of both. In the purity of her love, she sought only the accomplishment of the will of her God. "With Christ I am nailed to the cross," she said in a holy transport, and none understood better than she, that it is good to be with Christ even on the cross. The physicians having declared the malady hopeless on the fifth day, she received the last sacraments, made her profession of faith, and then asked pardon, first of the Father Superior and of her director, then of the Mother Superior and community, thanking them

for their charity and expressing her regret at the trouble which her long illness had occasioned them. Hearing shortly after, that the grand-daughter of an Algonquin Chief had just joined the seminary, she expressed a wish to see the child, and after affectionately caressing her, she once more impressively exhorted her dear Sisters ever cordially to cherish her "joys," as she called the Indians. All the pupils, both French and savage, were repeatedly brought to receive her blessing.

Overwhelmed with the deepest grief, the religious redoubled their prayers and mortifications, beseeching that their precious Mother might be left to them even a little longer. She could not understand their desire to prolong a life which she deemed useless, but her director, Father Lalemant, comprehending her value to the community far better than she did herself, and compassionating the affliction of her children, commanded her to join in their prayers for her restoration. The order startled her, but at once raising her eyes and hands to heaven, she said, "I think I shall die of this illness, however if God wills that I should live longer, I am resigned." "That is all well, Mother," replied the inexorable Father, "but it is not enough; you must take our side of the question, and do your best to preserve yourself to the community, which still has need of you." The direction was too explicit to admit of appeal: preferring obedience to sacrifice, as had ever been her practice, she said, almost in the words of her own St. Martin of Tours, "My Lord and my God! if Thou seest that I am still necessary to this little community, I refuse not pain or labour: may

Thy will be done!" A change for the better was at once apparent, and so wonderfully rapid was the improvement, that at his next visit, the physician who had pronounced her recovery hopeless, declared her out of danger. She assisted at the solemn Te Deum which was offered in the choir in thanksgiving for her restoration, and with her usual sweet affability received the congratulations of her now happy daughters, as well as of her numerous friends. Presents of the most delicate food were sent from every quarter to tempt her appetite; she tried to partake of it through condescension, but since the commencement of her illness eight years before, her palate had retained a bitterness which imparted the flavour of gall to every species of nourishment, and necessarily created a loathing for it.

Her convalescence continued during the Lent; she was able to join in the ceremonies of Palm Sunday, and on Good Friday, to assist at the Passion and the Adoration of the Cross, but that evening, she felt compelled to tell the Mother Superior that she was suffering excessively from the tumors in both sides. They proved to be abscesses, which on the next day had to be laid open to the bone. She bore this, and subsequent torturing operations as if she had been deprived of all sense of feeling. Once she slightly shuddered, and then she accused herself of impatience, and asked forgiveness. The humility, meekness, and charity always so striking in her seemed to have gained an increase under this new test, but it was because she had laid up an abundant store of them in the days of her strength, that they did not fail in the hour of nature's weakness, when,

above all, is proved the truth of the maxim, that it is the moment of trial which shows what we really are. When, long years before, she had offered herself to God as His Victim, it was with the full comprehension that the title implied a life of suffering and sacrifice ; now that the hour of immolation had come, she renewed the oblation, content to bear her excruciating pains to the day of judgment, if only God could be thus honoured, and the salvation of souls promoted. Some of the Sisters having asked her to share her merits with them, she replied with a smile, "All belongs to the savages ; I have no longer anything of my own." The holy Communion, which she received every alternate day, continued to be her support in death, as it had been in life. By the end of the week, it was apparent that her strength was declining, and her life fast passing away. When informed that all chance of recovery was at an end, her countenance beamed with celestial joy, and from that moment until her last, her existence was one almost uninterrupted ecstasy. Although constantly absorbed in God, she replied sweetly and amiably to all who spoke to her, but at the same time in as few words as possible. The Mother St. Athanasius, who never left her, asked if she had any commission for her son. She seemed affected at the question, and begged the Mother to let him know that she would bear him to heaven in her heart and pray for his perfect sanctification. On the morning of the 30th of April, feeling that the last hour was near, she wished to bid a final adieu to her dear little Indians. She blessed them with all the love of her great heart, and then spoke a few

impressive words to them in their own language on the beauty of our holy mysteries and the happiness of serving God. At mid-day, she entered into her agony, if that could be called an agony, where there was no straggle. Although she lost her speech and hearing, it was easy to see that her soul was intimately united to God. Her trembling hand still tried to lift the crucifix to her lips, and when her confessor would have rendered her this service, he found it so impossible to disengage the beloved image from her grasp, that he had to substitute another. A few minutes before six in the evening, she opened her eyes and looked at her dear Sisters, as if to take a last farewell of them, then closed them for ever to earth. At six o'clock, two faint sighs were heard,—so faint, that but for the breathless stillness of the room they must have been inaudible, but the hearing of affection is acute, and every heart present caught the feeble echo, and interpreted it correctly. Death had come at last, but death in a form so fair, that even angels might have envied it, if angels could die. In its flight to God, her pure soul seemed to have left a lingering ray of glory flitting round the calm, still features, which shone as if illumined with heaven's own light, and almost dazzled the beholders by their seraphic beauty. All the Sisters witnessed and attested the prodigy; tradition has faithfully handed it down even to our own day, and still, as each revolving year brings round the 30th of April, a solemn Te Deum resounds through the Ursuline Church at Quebec, as a thanksgiving to God for the exceptional privileges attending the blessed death of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

To say that grief for her loss was universal, would be more than superfluous. Throughout the country, she had for many a year been known, consulted, prized, revered, beloved: now that the Mother was taken from amidst her children, no wonder that the children were lonely and that they mourned their desolation. It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the savages; as soon as the news of her death reached Sillery and Loretto, they came crowding round the monastery to pray for her whom they had loved so well and with so much reason. "Our Mother is dead!" It was all they said, and all they had to say. Sorrow like theirs was too deep for words, and to show that they felt it so, they followed up the pathetic exclamation by a gesture indicating that they would speak no more. The Sisters, overcome by their child-like grief, tried to administer to them the comfort of which they were themselves so much in need, and then both went their respective ways to await in prayers and tears the sad, solemn hour which was to hide from them for ever, the object of their reverence and love.

From early dawn on the day of the interment, the convent church was filled to overflowing with a reverential crowd, all eager to pay the last honours to the venerated servant of God. Bishop Laval being then in France, the obsequies were performed by Monsieur de Bernières, Vicar-General of the diocese, Father Superior of the monastery, and nephew to the kind friend of the same name who had so efficiently promoted the success of the Ursuline foundation at Quebec. The funeral oration was preached by Father Lalemant, who better than any one else could

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do justice to his subject, and then the cherished and revered Mother of Canada was laid to her rest, in the vault destined as the place of sepulture of the community.

Unwilling to lose all trace of her dear familiar features, the authorities both civil and religious joined in requesting that while there was yet time, her likeness might be secured. Accordingly, the day after the interment the coffin was uncovered, and an artist sent by the Governor succeeded in taking a remarkably correct one. This portrait was unfortunately consumed in the second conflagration of the monastery in 1686. That which now hangs in the community room of the Ursuline convent, Quebec, was sent from France.

The Mother of the Incarnation was tall, and the dignity of her deportment was so striking, that while she was in the world, persons were often seen to stand and look at her as she proceeded unconsciously through the streets on her missions of devotion or charity. The gravity of her demeanour was tempered by the modesty of her address, and the courteous affability of her manner. Her features were regular, but their chief attraction lay in their expression, which seemed like a revelation of the invisible beauty of her soul. The irresistible sweetness of her glance appeared to leave a trace of heaven wherever it fell, and although her habitual interior union with God communicated something of an unearthly air to her exterior, no one ever felt restrained or ill at ease in her company. Her constitution was strong, and thereby fitted for the life of unceasing labour to which God called her. She

possessed mental qualities of a high order, had great natural abilities, and was what the world would call a clever woman of business, but best of all, she was a saint. From the hour, when at seven years of age she consecrated her young soul to God, until that when at seventy-two, she surrendered it into His hands, her one sole aim had been to adorn it with every virtue, so that it might become ever more and more pleasing in the eyes of His Divine Majesty, and so well did she succeed in this her holy object, that the history of her life, is in fact the history of her virtues ; in studying the one, we have at the same time been making acquaintance with the other. Much however as we have learned of those resplendent virtues, we fain would pause a moment longer on them before relinquishing her sweet company, just as we love to linger over a beautiful sunset, and even after the great orb has disappeared, still to watch the traces of his departing glory resting on the golden clouds.

As the virtues of the Mother of the Incarnation have passed in review before us in the course of her history, the same thought may perhaps have occurred to us, as to her son, Dom Claude Martin, that where all were so admirable, it would be difficult to say which was the most worthy of special notice. She was raised up, we know, to glorify God both in her own person and in that of her neighbour ; in her own, by her individual sanctification,—in that of her neighbour by leading many souls to heaven. For the fulfilment of this two-fold destiny, it is evident that she had need of a deep ground-work of humility, with a vast fund of charity and self-abnegation ; accordingly we find her possessed of these virtues in

such perfection, that remarkable as she was for every other, we may perhaps consider her greatest of all in these. In the exalted degree of union with Himself by which the Almighty recompensed her generosity, we adore His own immense, gratuitous liberality;—in the heroism with which, aided by Divine grace, she died to every human feeling, we admire the grandeur of her own utter detachment from self, and the beauty of her thoroughly spiritualized nature.

Her humility, she had early established on the fundamental principles, that God is all, and the creature nothing. From these two truths, as from two great fountain heads, came the one absorbing desire of her life, that the All should engulf the nothing; that God should be exalted and she herself annihilated; hence, there was no height to which she would not have soared to promote honour to God, and no depth to which she would not have descended to procure her own abasement. The generosity of her humility inspired her equally to undertake great things for her Divine Master, when His service required them, and to remain contentedly in inaction when this was more agreeable to Him. Far from attaching any importance to the benefits which she had conferred on the monastery, she looked on herself as useless, sincerely believing that she was tolerated in the house of God only through charity. "I know nothing," she wrote; "I do nothing in comparison with my Sisters; although I teach others, I am the most ignorant of all." That these were no mere empty words was proved by her insatiable thirst for humiliation, to which her humble soul was drawn by the consideration of God's greatness and

her own nothingness, as a stone to its centre by its natural weight. In reading of the success which crowned her labours, and the universal love and reverence which her great qualities inspired, we are tempted to imagine, that whatever may have been her interior crosses, she must at least have been a stranger to the mortifications which come to us from others. But it was not so. She loved humiliation in her heart of hearts, as the appropriate homage of the nothing to the All, and God loved her too much to spare it, therefore all through life, in youth as in mature age, in Canada as in France, in religion as in the world, it followed her like a shadow. "I am destined for the cross," she wrote to one of the Mothers at Touss; "trials are my lot, and in them is my peace; help me to return thanks to Him who provides for me so generously." She was contradicted and slighted; she was suspected, misjudged and misrepresented, sometimes to test her virtue, sometimes from more questionable motives, but the possibility that she could be wronged or unjustly depreciated, never for a moment seemed to occur to her. Considering herself the last, the lowest, the most sinful of God's creatures, she confessed that any amount of humiliation was inadequate to her deserts, while at the same time firmly impressed that the unfavourable opinions expressed of her were the correct ones, she was incapable of resentment. The Sisters who knew how discourteously she was often treated, once asked her how she had been able to restrain her irritation under some particular insult; "I have guarded against that," she replied, "by forgetting all about it." 'You admired our Mother's humility under her last

annoyance," one Sister remarked to another ; " yet this was a trivial one compared with those to which she is accustomed ; still nobody ever hears her speak of them." Nevertheless she owned that the persecutions which she endured thus silently, were more trying than even her terrible temptations, for that while the one caused her only personal suffering, the other checked the work of God. Her imperturbable equanimity under humiliations sometimes led to a doubt of her having noticed them at all ; she had, and that very clearly too, but because she loved the contempt which she believed her due, she received each new evidence of it with an interior joy, and an exterior calmness, which deceived superficial observers. While incapable of taking offence herself, if she thought that she had inadvertently given even apparent cause of it to others, she never hesitated to ask pardon in the most humble manner even of the youngest Sister. No trace of self-reliance or self-esteem was ever seen in her. She was always ready to receive the suggestions and profit of the opinions even of those far inferior to her in every respect. It is recorded that when, consummated in virtue and experience, she was nearing the end of life, a novice who was at work with her, took the liberty of remarking that she was doing hers wrong. " Show me, my child, how it should be done," the humble Mother gently answered, and while the novice had the simplicity to teach her mistress, the mistress had the humility to take the directions, although she knew them to be incorrect, saying that it matters little whether a piece of work be done in one way or in another, but very much that we practise

child-like humility, so as to deserve a place among the little ones of whom our Lord declared is the kingdom of heaven. Sinking ever lower and deeper into her nothingness, she found there a resting-place for her soul, a security against illusion, a safeguard for her virtue, and an antidote for self-complacent thoughts, if by a rare chance imagination ever suggested one.

The extraordinary graces with which God favoured her, far from exalting, served only to lower her in her own estimation. She fully recognised the magnificence of those graces, but wholly separating the great Giver from the lowly recipient, she viewed them in Him, not in herself; they were His always, hers never, and provided they redounded to His glory, she asked no more. "I am overwhelmed with astonishment," she writes, "that a God who is loved purely by myriads of millions of souls, should cast His eyes on me, the last of His creatures, and condescend to grant me a share in His love." And again, "If a soul is beautiful, good, or holy, it is with the beauty, the goodness and the holiness of God. Knowing that these attributes belong wholly to Him, she desires that He alone should have the honour of them, wishing no honour or praise for herself from any creature. Her only fear is lest vain complacency should open the door of the inner temple to the enemy, who would soon despoil her of her gifts." "Tremble for me," she said to her son, "when you hear of the favours which the Almighty has conferred on me, for He has placed His treasures in the very frailest of earthen vessels: the vessel may at any moment be broken and the contents lost." This

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humble distrust of human weakness never left her heart. "O my great God!" she would say, grant me humility, and help me to serve Thee as Thou commandest, in fear and trembling." "I am now near my end," she wrote two years before her death, "and I have yet done nothing worthy of a soul soon to appear before God. Our Lord has ever led me by the spirit of love and confidence, never by that of fear, but when I consider that through the frailty of my fallen nature, I may at any moment lose the Divine friendship, I am seized with dread, and overwhelmed with humiliation. I could not exist if I retained this apprehension of separation from God,—that all-good God from whom I have received more graces and favours than there are grains of sand in the ocean bed. But my firm confidence in His mercy dispels alarm, and rejecting doubts and fears, I cast myself trustingly into His arms, there to repose in peace." Her superior intelligence and eminent virtue would have rendered her a very desirable acquisition to the Jansenists, who used their best efforts to allure her to their ranks, but her humility was her safeguard, and to manifest her horror of their innovations, she would not even reply to their letters.

Flowing from her humility was her spirit of obedience, a virtue of which she so clearly recognised the imperative necessity for all who aim at perfection, that she would do nothing but under its guidance. Even the revelations with which God had favoured her, she never thought of acting on, until she had submitted them to the examination of her director, and so persuaded was she that this course

was in accordance with the established order of Providence, that she would have thought herself deluded had she acted otherwise. She was perfectly free from the least attachment to her own lights, natural and supernatural, and never had a difficulty in subjecting her conduct and judgment to the guidance of superiors; this she esteemed a most special grace. It may be remembered that in the years of her servitude in her brother-in-law's house, she made a vow of obedience to him and her sister. Knowing nothing of it, they were lost in astonishment at her wonderful submission, which they could only attribute to her affection for themselves, and consequent zeal for their interests. After she entered religion, obedience was still among her favourite virtues; she almost flew to execute the most trivial order of superiors, or rather she recognised none as trivial, viewing all as emanating from God. In the position of Superior which she held for eighteen years, she still found means of exercising her beloved virtue, and when in the intervals, she resumed her place among the Sisters, her submission to the new Superior was that of a simple child. Obedience had become so natural to her from habit, that she was a stranger even to a repugnance to obey. She strongly inculcated the importance of obedience to spiritual direction, saying that it is the source of that true simplicity which forms the saints.

A soul so humble could not but be meek, and so it was notorious, that although while she was engaged in the world her business had been of a most harassing kind, and that in Canada her varied duties brought her into continual contact with persons of

all classes and all humours, she never was seen out of patience. Even when most severely pressed at the time of her great interior trials by temptations to antipathy and irritability, the closest observer could scarcely ever have detected that vanquished nature had made an effort to rebel. If perchance an almost imperceptible reflection of her pains of soul ever passed over her accustomed sweetness of demeanour, she reproached herself for it as for a fault. After her death, when her virtues formed the favourite topic of conversation in her bereaved community, one who had known her for thirty years, observed that "the Mother of the Incarnation always showed the courage of the lion in confronting difficulties and dangers, and the gentleness of the lamb in her intercourse with her neighbour." And this latter remark applied not only to the meekness which is easily maintained because it is not tried, but much more to that which bears the test of sharp and continuous contradictions, and is never found to fail. A person who had occasioned her very great annoyance, finally pronounced as his conclusive opinion, that her patience was made of iron. She was, indeed, so thoroughly inured to mortifications, that injuries had ceased to be injuries, and enemies were enemies no more. Those who had treated her worst, might, for that reason, count securely on special evidences of her sweetness and kindness. For the sake of peace, she was ever ready to yield her judgment, when this could be done without compromise of duty.

It once happened that in an important matter submitted to the decision of the community, she

held a different opinion from most of the Sisters. Finding herself in the minority, she at once yielded the point without a remonstrance or even a remark. A Sister who took her view of the case, a little disappointed at such ready acquiescence, observed, "Well, Mother, one would think that you had made a vow to obey those people, and do just as they wish." "No," replied the Mother, with her own gentle smile, "I have not vowed to obey them or consult their wishes, but I have promised to please God, and for His love to do all in my power to maintain peace with my neighbour." Perfect, however, as was the meekness of the Venerable Mother, her firmness could equal it when occasion required, and never, perhaps, were the two qualities more admirably balanced in any character than in hers.

Compassion for all in want or trouble seemed like an instinct of her nature. It showed itself, as we have seen, from her earliest childhood, and gained strength with every breath of her life. To see her fellow-creatures in distress, and not make an effort to relieve them, was at all times an impossibility to her kind heart. Known in the world as the mother and advocate of the poor, in religion she maintained, and, if possible, strengthened her claim to the beautiful title. She would have considered that a lost day on which she had not exercised the works of mercy, so during her prolonged tenure of authority as Superior, it was remarked that she never passed one without giving alms of one kind or another. Among the distressed French families whom she thus relieved were persons of respectable condition, who she knew would have shrunk from manifesting

their poverty, therefore she took care to spare them the necessity of an appeal for charity, managing also to have her gifts conveyed so cautiously, that they should be unable to trace them to their source, or to consider them in the light of alms. When nothing more remained to her for the destitute, she called on the resources of the rich, and when these, too, were exhausted, she had recourse to God, who never failed to send her help in her emergencies.

If she was the refuge of the French in their wants, still more was she the resource of the Indians, to whom her generous heart and her hospitable monastery were ever open. Vain would be the attempt to tell of all she did and all she endured to procure means of providing for them in their necessities, and helping them through their difficulties. But if their temporal welfare was a subject of deepest concern to her, infinitely more lively was her zeal for their spiritual interests; to these she had devoted her labours; to these she had consecrated her energies and her life; for these were her first, her last, her ceaseless prayers. So well did she succeed in communicating her own ardour to the rest of the community, that from the very commencement of the house the Sisters bound themselves to receive the Holy Communion and recite the Rosary once every month in honour of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, observing a fast on the eve of the festival, all in order to obtain the conversion of the savages. This beautiful devotion is perpetuated in the monastery to the present day.

Another practice of the first Mothers was to draw by lot the names of the different Indian tribes, each

offering her prayers, labours, and merits for the conversion of that which had fallen to her. The Venerable Mother had her particular nation like the rest, but her great heart embraced all others at the same time, for nothing less than all could satisfy zeal which, like hers, embraced the universe. As her history has shown us, her whole life in Canada was but one prolonged act of charity to the forlorn race, and when that life was about to close, she bequeathed her love for them to her community, as the most precious legacy she had to bestow.

As well-ordered charity begins at home, her Sisters were naturally the first objects of hers. From the commencement of her religious career, her delight had been to oblige and serve them at the cost of any amount of personal fatigue or inconvenience, and, when Superior, it was her practice to do a considerable portion of their work in addition to her own, thus to procure them a little more rest. That all might be enabled to retire sooner after their weary day, she took for her especial charge to remain up the last at night, and see all the fires extinguished—no easy task when wood was the only fuel, the huge, red-hot logs requiring much time and caution in the cooling. She has been known to leave herself without bed-clothes in the intense cold of winter nights, that she might add a little to the comfort of her shivering novices, her own chilled frame meantime depending for warmth, as Père Charlevoix remarks, “only on the fire of her love;” and this was but one small instance of the compassionate charity which she was ever practising.

She had peculiar tact in reconciling enemies, and a

wondrous gift for consoling the afflicted, especially those tried by temptations and interior pains. Many were the sufferers who came to her sorrowful and discouraged, and left her presence consoled and strengthened. Once a person under great trial sought her help, but experienced insuperable difficulty in communicating the subject of her pains. "Let us pray, my child," the Mother said, "that God may enlighten me." Leaning her head on her hand, she prayed for the space of a *Pater* and *Ave*; then looking up gently, she asked, "What hesitation could you have had in telling me such and such a thing?"—specifying the causes of trouble. "Should you not have known me better?" Having directed the person what course to pursue, and exhorted her to courage, fidelity, and abandonment to God, she foretold her that her troubles were not at an end, but consoled her by the assurance that they would tend to the Divine honour. The wise counsels not only imparted immediate peace to the suffering soul, but, moreover, helped to sustain her through the remainder of the conflict, which, as the event proved, was not yet over. The good Mother was ever at the command of all who sought her help, ready at all times to lay aside her most pressing occupations the moment any one expressed a desire to speak to her, giving her visitors ample opportunity of unburdening their minds fully, and dismissing all satisfied and consoled. She could not endure to hear an unkind remark, and so perfect was her own practice of charity in speech, that she was never known to utter a word to the disadvantage of any one, even those who had treated her worst. Such was the

tenderness of her compassion for the erring, that, as she was accustomed to say, she would have wished to hide them in her heart.

She was so easily pleased, that the charge of assisting her in her different occupations, was quite an envied post. A Sister, who for several years had had the care of preparing her colors for her paintings, and her materials for gilding and similar works, declared that during all that time she had never heard a word from her lips but of encouragement, gentleness, and affection. The kind Mother took delight in teaching her what she knew, and then, with the liveliest interest, would show the Sister's attempts to all who entered, remarking how good they were, and how sure the pupil would be to advance if she only had courage. "How can you praise such work, dear Mother?" somebody one day asked in reference to another's Sister's production; "you who are so good a judge, and, therefore must have seen its defects." "It was done to the best of the Sister's ability," the Mother answered, "so it was well done for her, and in that sense deserving of praise." Although always recollected in God, she liked to see her Sisters gay at recreation, and that she might be no restraint on their innocent mirth, was herself invariably cheerful. The instances on record of her charity to her neighbour, both before and after she entered religion, are much too numerous for insertion in these pages, but we cannot have perused her history, without discerning that the beautiful spirit of fraternal love influenced her whole life, manifesting itself in a ceaseless effort to relieve the wants, console the sorrows, promote the temporal happiness,

and, above all, advance the spiritual interests of all within her reach, as well as by her prayers and desires, of those beyond it.

Charity and patience like those of the Mother Mary of the Incarnation can flourish only in souls whence inordinate self-love has been banished; detachment from self is, in fact, their essence and their life. It was because that of the Venerable Mother was so deeply grounded, that her love of her neighbour was proof against all trials. Disengagement from self is synonymous with sacrifice of self, and of this she was unsparing. For her greater merit, and our instruction and encouragement, the Almighty permitted that during several successive years she should feel the revolt of her passions, and experience all that is painful to nature in the effort to subdue them. The perfect control over them which resulted in her admirable meekness and forbearance was the reward of her fidelity in the hour of the conflict. If her passions were brought so thoroughly under subjection to reason and faith, that they seemed at last to have lost their power, the grand conquest was the work of mortification. Knowing that Christ would live in her in the plenitude of His Spirit, only when her natural life had been destroyed, she sought opportunities of self-crucifixion, as men in general seek chances of gratification and enjoyment. Every feeling, every faculty, every sense, was fastened to the cross. To her interior mortification there was no limit; to her exterior, only that imposed by obedience, and as long as her austerities involved no singularity, obedience imposed but little restraint on them.

While apparently leading an ordinary life, she contrived that no part of her frame should be without its particular suffering, managing to transform into new acts of penance, the very refreshment of food and sleep. Her joy was in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which not only the external, but also the inner world was crucified to her. At any moment of her existence, as well as on her dying bed, she might have truly said, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross;" and with equal truth she might have added, "God forbid that I should glory save in that precious and well-loved cross."

The earnestness with which she sought the entire crucifixion of nature, appears in the rules which she laid down for her particular guidance after having made her vow to do in all things what she believed most perfect. By these she bound herself to make no excuse when unjustly accused; to watch so carefully over mind and heart, that no complaint should escape her under any provocation; never to speak a word to her own advantage, and to be always ready to applaud what was commendable in others; to show special sweetness to those for whom nature felt least inclined; to embrace with loving resignation all trials from God and from creatures; to repress every emotion of self-love, and every reflection on subjects calculated to arouse its sensibilities. These rules, founded on the maxims of the Gospel, formed the guide of her life.

Her virtues were solid, because her humility, their foundation, was profound, and because her humility was profound, God exalted her to a degree of purity of

soul, and a consequent height of union with Himself, rarely attained here below. During the whole of her life in France, she was accustomed, as we know, to wonderful supernatural communications, but from the time of her going to Canada, all such favours as could attract the eyes of men were withdrawn, the Almighty having then intimated His will that her perfection should henceforth consist in the practices of ordinary life. But although visible extraordinary favours were suspended, it was not so with the invisible work of Divine grace; that went on ever advancing towards its consummation. From the age of twenty, she had possessed the wondrous privilege of uninterrupted union with God. It was her habitual permanent condition; neither suffering of mind, nor infirmity of health, nor pressure of business, nor weight of care could divert her from it for a moment. Distractions might flit through, and even trouble her imagination, but they never reached the inner soul, which through all, maintained an uninterrupted view of the Divine presence. Her constant application to spiritual things never interfered with the perfect fulfilment of her external duties, while on the other hand, the most dissipating exterior occupations never for one instant disturbed her interior recollection. Never were the spirit of Martha and of Mary more admirably or more perfectly combined. If prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, it may be said without any exaggeration, that her whole life was spent in this heavenly exercise. At the time of actual prayer, she appeared like a seraph of love, her very aspect sufficing to excite devotion in the coldest heart. This was an opinion often expressed

by the pupils, who delighted in observing her at prayer, and sometimes managed even to approach near enough to kiss her feet or her habit unperceived. It is not given to us to speak of the sublimity of her prayer, especially towards the end of life. As it became more and more simplified, it were perhaps best described as one unbroken sigh of love. "My God! my great God! my Life! my Love! my Glory!" This," she wrote, "is my prayer; these words nourish my soul, not only at the time of actual prayer, but all through the day, from the moment of rising, to that of retiring to rest. Imperfect as I am, I feel habitually lost in my God, to whom I have been so many years united by indescribably intimate bonds. I see His amiability, His grandeur, His majesty, His power, without previous reasoning, or research. I can find no words to express what I would say to Him, yet the silence of simple faith is eloquent. But although my soul is ever absorbed in my God, it never loses sight of its own misery; the abyss of His greatness engulphs the abyss of its nothingness." Not satisfied with all the love of the angels and saints, she desired that her heart could burn even with infinite love, that so she might love her God adequately. She prayed our Lord to place her heart on His, that on that altar of fire it might be made a perfect holocaust of love. "I ask of Him," she said, "no earthly riches, treasures or joys, but only that I may die of His love." Under the severest temporal losses, even in the midst of privations and positive want, she felt, she said, as if needing nothing, for then especially she belonged to God, and God belonged to her, and possessing Him, she had nothing

to desire. She had indeed reached that blessed state in which the soul exists more in the God whom she loves, than in the body which she animates.* Yet elevated as she was to sublimest heights of supernatural contemplation, she never failed carefully to prepare a subject of ordinary meditation, true to the end, to her love of common practices, and her esteem of common ways, from which, as we have so often remarked, she never swerved but in obedience to the irresistible attraction of the Holy Spirit, and she ever maintained that the most exalted spiritual state is that distinguished, not by raptures and ecstasies, but by the perfect practice of the maxims of the Gospel, and the closest interior union with Jesus. Her piety was solid and practical, and in one of her letters to her son, we find the remark that she never could content herself with a devotion of mere sentiment and imagination. Our Lord, she said, assumed our nature, that He might become our Model. In every condition, we can imitate Him by the practice of His maxims, which not only discover to us what we have to retrench and correct in our lives and conduct, but also guide us to the means of accomplishing that difficult work of self-correction. Devotion that is not practical, seemed to her, she said, like an edifice built on moving sand.

She had a lively confidence in the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and always concluded the spiritual exercises of each day by recommending to the Eternal Father through Its infinite merits, the Church of Canada, the preachers of the Gospel, and her friends.

* Words quoted by Gerson from St. Augustine and St. Bernard.

Her evening prayers to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, are generally known and widely circulated not only in Canada, but in many other countries also, especially among Ursulines. For the benefit of those who may not be acquainted with them, we shall insert them at the end of the volume. She had a very particular devotion also to the ever adorable Trinity, and to the most precious Blood. Of her love for the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, it would be superfluous to speak. Her sentiments on the holy Communion may be epitomized in the one word, that "she wished her life could be one perpetual Communion." She was accustomed to say that she found in communion strength and support for her soul under all the trials and difficulties of life, and so sensibly did she experience its blessed effects, that it almost seemed as if for her the veil of the sacrament had been removed, and the hidden wonders of the mystery of love made manifest.

Among the saints, after their glorious Queen, she honoured St. Joseph and St. Francis of Paula. St. Joseph she had loved from childhood on account of his connection with our Lord and His Blessed Mother; her devotion had received a new impulse from the time when he was shown to her in her vision as the Patron of Canada. Her veneration for St. Francis of Paula originated in the family traditions, which told how when the saint came to France at the prayer of Louis XI, one of his escort from Italy was her great-grandfather, who in the fervour of his simple faith, frequently took his children to visit God's servant and receive his blessing. She

loved to allude to the circumstance and no wonder, for there can be no doubt that a large share of that holy blessing had descended to herself, and many were the spiritual helps which she received from the saint in her progress through her pilgrimage. She had also a special devotion to the holy Angels.

The history of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, has spoken for itself, it is therefore as unnecessary as it would be easy to multiply testimonies to her merits, both from contemporary and more recent writers, still, as it would be doing her an injustice to omit them altogether, we shall insert a very few among the large number at hand. Bishop Laval who knew her well, writes "She was adorned with every virtue in an exalted degree, and eminently endowed in particular, with the gift of prayer and union with God. She was perfectly dead to self, living and acting only by the Spirit of Jesus. The Almighty having chosen her for the great work of founding the Ursuline Order in Canada, He granted her the plenitude of the spirit of that holy institute. She was an admirable Superior, an excellent guide for novices, and equally qualified for every other position in her community. Her life, externally ordinary, was interiorly divine, so that she was deservedly looked on by her Sisters as a living rule." The eulogy of Père Charlevoix is equally strong. After calling her "the Teresa of New France," he says, "History presents few women who can be compared with her, as none will deny who attentively study her life and writings. Such," he continues, "was the opinion of the most enlightened individuals of

the age in which she lived; her most eloquent panegyrists were those who knew her best.

The Mother Cecilia of the Holy Cross, who had never been separated from her since they left Dieppe together on their way to Canada, declared that in the thirty-three years of their close companionship, she had never seen her transgress against meekness, patience, humility, charity, obedience or poverty, or omit an opportunity of practising these great religious virtues.

To Dom Claude Martin, Madame de la Peltrie wrote after her return from her expedition to Montreal, "I esteem myself happy and honoured in the privilege of living under the roof with the Mother of the Incarnation. If I survive her, I shall give you many particulars of her life which will call forth your gratitude to God. She is truly a chosen soul, precious in the eyes of the Lord. What I particularly admire in her, is her fidelity to the duties of common life, and the love which she evinces for those who treat her ill. She lives in great detachment from all but God; perfect abandonment to Providence; unalterable peace, and a constant interior recollection truly admirable. How happy I should be if I possessed the tenth part of her virtues!"

Announcing her decease to the monasteries of the Order in France, her Superior says, among other things, "Her death was the echo of her holy life, passed as it was in the continual practice of the most heroic virtues. Though Superior for eighteen years at different times, she was the most submissive in the house to the one who occupied the place in the intervals. Her exactitude to rule was perfect. Her humility persuaded

her that she was unworthy to associate with her Sisters, whose every act of virtue she observed with admiration. Her zeal for the glory of God, far from having diminished with time, became at last a consuming fire. Her patience both in life and death was truly admirable." . . .

The tradition of her holiness passed from generation to generation, not only of the inmates of the monastery, but of the inhabitants of Quebec generally. Years served but to confirm the impression of her merits, and at last that impression took the form of one earnest, unanimous desire and prayer, that our holy Mother the Church would deign to gladden the heart of every Catholic in Canada, by admitting the Mother Mary of the Incarnation to a share in the public veneration which she allows to her canonized saints. Numerous postulatory letters to this effect were addressed to his late Holiness of saintly and venerated memory, Pope Pius IX., who after the usual delay, permitted the preliminary steps towards the Beatification. The cause was introduced on the 15th of September, 1877, when the Mother Mary of the Incarnation was honoured with the title of Venerable, the prelude, as we humbly trust, to one more glorious and exalted still. Among the postulatory letters is one which cannot be read without very particular interest. It bears the signature of the Huron Grand Chief, followed by that of the principal chiefs and warriors of the tribe.

" **MOST HOLY FATHER**,—The greatest of Fathers after Him who is in heaven, we are the least of your children, but you are the representative of

Him who said, ‘Suffer little children to come to me,’ so we approach with confidence to prostrate at your feet.

“Most Holy Father,—We the chiefs and warriors of the Huron tribe, humbly present you a perfume of rich fragrance, composed of the virtues of the Reverend Mother Mary of the Incarnation. Deign, Holy Father, to offer it to God, that passing through your hands it may more surely find acceptance in His sight.

“The Mother of the Incarnation called us from our forests, that she might teach us to know and adore the true Master of life. She took our hearts in her hand and placed them before the Eternal, as a basket of fruit of her own culling.

“Through her instructions we have learned meekness; wolves and bears have fawned on her; the angry roar of fury has been changed into the hymn of praise.

“Our mothers kissed the traces of her footsteps, and then signed our foreheads with the blessed dust, fruitful for eternity. With her own hands she impressed the sign of faith on our hearts, and it has never since been effaced. Thanks to her, we are able to read the books which recall her benefits. We ourselves could fill many books with testimonies of our respectful gratitude.

“She loved us with a human as well as a spiritual affection, so she is twice our mother.

“It is through her teaching, and for her sake, that we have renounced our native wilds, and come to live among our more civilized brethren. The Bear,

the Wolf, the Goat, the Beaver and the Tortoise* will be henceforth chained to the sanctuary, and their occupation will be to celebrate the praises of the Master of life.

"Many moons have passed since that first dawning of the true light. Our once flourishing nation is on the eve of extinction, but,

"Most Holy Father, we beseech you to receive with the last prayer and last sigh of the Hurons, the assurance of their profound reverence for the Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

"The bones of our fathers will exult in their tombs, if your voice proclaims the eternal happiness of the Mother to whom we are indebted for our faith.

"She found among our women, virgins worthy of admittance to the sanctuary, and among our warriors, missionaries and martyrs who will weave a crown for her in heaven. There remains to us only one drop of Huron blood, but if that could enrich the immortal crown of the Mother of the Incarnation, we would willingly bid it flow.

"Prostrate at your feet, Most Holy Father, we implore your benediction."

Then follow the sixteen signatures of the Grand Chief and his fellow petitioners.

The day on which the touching appeal of the Hurons shall be responded to, will gladden many a heart besides theirs.

* Appellations of the five principal families of the tribe.

Meantime, O Mother ! we thank the Lord for the magnificent graces bestowed on thee, and for thy fidelity in corresponding with them. We thank Him for having given us in thee so glorious a model of religious perfection, and we pray that thy example may ever guide and thy spirit ever animate us. We beseech thee to watch from heaven over the Order which on earth thou didst love so well and adorn so brightly, and to obtain that no Ursuline may ever show herself unworthy of her exalted and cherished title of a daughter of St. Angela, and of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation.



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APPENDIX.

ON the 30th of April, 1833, more than a century and a half after the saintly death of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, her precious remains were removed with due solemnity from the vault where they had long lain, to a place of greater honour in the choir of the Ursuline monastery. On the occasion of this translation, the vault was discovered to be quite full of water, and when the Venerable Mother's coffin was opened before being consigned to its new resting-place, it was seen by many witnesses to be also filled with the same clear crystal fluid. The circumstance was easily explained by the gradual filtration of water into the vault, whence it had penetrated into the leaden case through small openings in the soldering. But although the presence of the water could be thus simply accounted for, contact with the remains of God's holy servant had given it a manifest claim to special reverence; it was therefore cautiously drawn off, and has since been so carefully preserved, that although very generously shared with numerous petitioners for it, the supply is not yet quite exhausted. One sealed bottle of this water is kept for the admiration of posterity. The Almighty has been pleased to glorify Himself in His faithful servant, by permitting that it should become the instrument of many wonderful cures.* We are not, however, to suppose that reli-

* In the History of the Ursuline Monastery of Quebec, published in 1866, the writer says: "Some years ago, a woman of the neighbourhood informed me that her daughter had been cured of a very serious affection of the eyes at the close of a Novena to the

ance on the prayers of the Mother of the Incarnation dates only from its discovery; confidence in her intercession has, on the contrary, ever kept pace with veneration for her memory, and this, we know, has never varied except to increase.

No account has reached us of the favours obtained through the mediation of the Venerable Mother, previous to the discovery of the water: whether an earlier record may have at one time existed, and been afterwards destroyed by fire or otherwise, is uncertain. Even of the favours received since 1833, no regular register was kept until 1867. In that year, Monseigneur Baillargeon, Archbishop of Quebec, appointed a commission to examine and test, according to canonical forms, all facts tending to demonstrate the sanctity of the Mother of the Incarnation. It then became matter of universal regret that so little publicity had been given to the prodigies wrought through her intercession: it would seem as if men's minds had become so familiarized with them from the frequency of their recurrence, that no one had hitherto thought of attracting general attention to them. On the occasion alluded to, however, the witnesses of the most recent were examined, and

Venerable Mother, on each day of which, the water of the tomb had been applied to the diseased part. 'I have a little of the water left,' she added, 'and I would not give it up for any consideration. I have eight children dependent for support on my work; if one of them fell sick, what should I do? I could not fee a doctor, so my only resource is in the water.' Imagining that she attached the idea of some medicinal property to it, we hastened to assure her that it was only ordinary water, which derived its efficacy from the prayers of the Mother of the Incarnation, whom she had so fervently invoked. 'No, no,' she exclaimed, cutting short the explanation; 'it is not ordinary water; if it were, it would corrupt and diminish, but instead of that, it seems to me to increase. It is extraordinary water,' she said; 'it is holy water.' We left her under her agreeable impression," adds the narrator, "thinking that the prodigy had perhaps been permitted in recompense of her simple faith and confidence in our holy Mother."

on their testimony, a considerable number were proved.

We extract a few from the long catalogue, for the honour of Him who is glorious in His saints, promising that we do not apply the epithet "miraculous," in its strict sense, to the occurrences about to be related, the Church having in her wisdom reserved to herself the right to pronounce definitively on miracles. We merely state facts certified by witnesses of unimpeachable character, leaving to the superior tribunal to decide as to their supernatural origin.

Miss Margaret Mary Gowan had completely lost the use of an arm for nearly a year previous to the opening of the tomb of the Mother of the Incarnation in 1833, and was cured after making a Novena to the Venerable Mother, and using the water of the tomb. She was then a boarder at the Ursulines, and is now a Sister of Charity in Quebec. This fact, adds the convent annalist, inspired great confidence in the efficacy of the water which we had just collected from the tomb with religious veneration.

A child of nine years of age, named Mary Adela Brunette, who had always been remarkable for delicate health, was seized on the evening of December 31, 1853, with pain in the eyes so violent as to deprive her of sleep. A few days later, a film was observed on both eyes, which it gradually overspread, the pain meantime retaining its first intensity. The child had not only to be confined to a room whence all light had been excluded, but moreover to wear a thick bandage across her eyes. So great were her sufferings, that her father often said he would infinitely rather see her dead, than witness them. For six months she had the best medical advice, but remedies seemed only to aggravate pain. To open her eyes, appeared an impossibility.

Towards the end of July, 1854, a friend proposed to the child's parents to pray for her cure through the intercession of the Venerable Mother of the Incarnation. The suggestion was at once adopted, the parents and

several neighbouring families arranging to meet daily at the house of the little girl's uncle, a man remarkable for piety. The invalid was conducted thither on the first day with extreme difficulty, precautions having been taken to render her eyes absolutely inaccessible to the faintest ray of light. The next day, she asked to walk without support, taking care, however, to cling closely to her mother's side. Soon she could endure the light sufficiently to guide herself, was able to distinguish objects, and expressed surprise at some slight alterations which had been made in the house during the seven months of her illness. On the ninth day, one of her eyes was quite clear. Meantime, some of the water of the tomb had been procured ; it was applied during a second Novena, and the result was the child's perfect restoration. She was not only free from pain, but able to bear the strongest sun-light.

The above particulars were given at Quebec, on the 3rd of June, 1862, by the young girl herself, and confirmed by her mother. She had then had no return of disease of the eyes ; her general health was excellent, and her strength equal to any demand on it. She was so convinced of having been cured through heavenly intervention, that she preserved as a precious relic, the empty phial which had once contained the water of the tomb.

On the 22nd of December, 1862, Dr. Landry, an eminent physician residing at Quebec, gave the following testimony, renewed in presence of several ecclesiastics, in 1867 :—

" In September, 1859, my daughter had an extremely violent attack of tic-douloureux in the left side of the face. The paroxysms recurred every two or three days, and lasted sometimes an hour, sometimes two or more. In November, the malady assumed a still more severe character, the paroxysms sometimes recurring twice in one day. Towards the end of December, the disease yielded to persevering medical treatment.

"On the 1st of February, 1860, the child entered the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, and the next day had a return of the malady, which continued without notable interruption until March 24th, the eve of the Annunciation. In this last stage of her illness, the attacks of pain were very frequent and very violent, numbering as many as four in a day.

"On the 16th of March, nine days before the feast of the Annunciation, one of the Sisters recommended her to beg the intercession of the Mother of the Incarnation in a Novena, in which the community and the pupils would unite. The paroxysms were violent, and of daily occurrence up to the second last day of the Novena, when the attack was comparatively light. This proved the last. From that moment she has had no return of the pain which for the previous six months had made her life a torture. This wonderful cure which has now lasted eight years, I can attribute only to the charitable and powerful intercession of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation."

Abridged TESTIMONY of the same DR. LANDRY, in 1862, relatively to the recovery of Mother St. Angela, an Ursuline Religious at Quebec.

"In 1859, my professional services were required by Mother Saint Angela, whose delicacy had been of long standing. She was suffering from a complication of diseases, and at the period referred to, was reduced to extreme exhaustion. The remedies resorted to, produced some slight improvement, but it proved only temporary, for, from the middle of February, 1862, her infirmities were so much aggravated, that she was obliged to keep her bed altogether. I had always looked on her as an incurable invalid, destined to wear out her life in broken health and constant suffering.

"At the beginning of May, of the same year, she told me that she felt better, and a few days later, declared to me by order of her Superior, that she was restored to health.

"I did not meet my former patient from that time,

until the present date, November, 1862, when wishing to assure myself of her actual condition before writing the above report, I asked to see her. She had an appearance of strength which I had never before observed in her, and although retaining some slight traces of her former maladies, was now able, she assured me, to fulfil all her duties, and to partake of the ordinary fare of the community with good appetite. Her movements, once evincing extreme debility, were marked by the activity and animation of a healthy young person. Her recovery was too prompt, too complete, and too permanent, to admit of my attributing it to the remedies which I had prescribed."

The following is the account of the same wonderful cure given by Mother St. Anne, Assistant of the monastery, and a person of great experience in the care of the sick :—

"The ill health of Mother St. Angela was of many years' standing, but from 1848 to 1862, her sufferings and consequent weakness had so considerably increased, that she had at last been compelled to give up all the regular observances of the community, as well as the duties of her particular charge.

"As that of a confirmed invalid, her case seemed to the chaplain of the monastery, one peculiarly suited to manifest the power of the prayers of the Mother of the Incarnation. Accordingly, to the general surprise, he suggested that a Novena should be offered to the Venerable Mother for the patient's recovery. The pupils especially were amazed when asked to join. 'Our Mistress general, whom we have not seen for three months!' they exclaimed; 'as well ask for the resurrection of the dead! Why, she is but half-alive, and not young either!' To induce them to unite, they had to be reminded of the omnipotence of the Most High, to whom it is as easy to repair His works, as it was to create them;—reminded, too, that the worse the case, the greater would be the wonder of the cure, should it please God to grant it. Still, several remained incredu-

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lous, and though all prayed, many felt but little confidence.

“On the 22nd of April, a solemn Novena was commenced, and it terminated on the 30th, the anniversary of the death of the holy Mother. After Mass, the Mother Superior proceeded to visit the invalid, who had communicated in bed at an early hour, and unwilling to believe that she had not been cured, told her to rise. Mother St. Angela attempted to do so, but even with assistance, could not stand, and had no resource but to return to bed. ‘You see, Mother,’ she said, ‘our good God wills me to remain in my present state. I had a great desire that my recovery should redound to the honour of the Mother of the Incarnation, but God’s will be done! Let us think no more of recovery.’ ‘That is not my view of the subject,’ replied the Mother Superior, as if suddenly inspired. ‘You must begin another Novena to-morrow, asking our Venerable Mother to obtain for you at least sufficient health to fulfil the duties of your charge, and at the close of this Novena, you will assist at Mass, and communicate in the choir.’ In all simplicity, the invalid commenced a second Novena on the 1st of May, again joined by all the Sisters and boarders. On the very first day, she felt well enough to resume the recitation of the Office. Appetite, sleep and strength rapidly returned; on the seventh day, she went down to the confessional, and on the eighth, heard Mass, and received Holy Communion in the choir, as she had been ordered. She immediately commenced a Novena of thanksgiving at the tomb of the Mother of the Incarnation, and before its close, had resumed all the regular observances, including very early rising, the fasts and abstinences prescribed by rule, and the chanting of the Divine Office. Surprised and overjoyed, the pupils entoned a triumphant ‘Magnificat’ for the recovery of their ‘resuscitated Mother,’ as they called her.” During the two years which had elapsed since the cure, when the above statement was written, Mother St. Angela had had no necessity to omit a single community exercise, from four o’clock in the morning to nine at night. So perfect was her recovery, that she said her previous illness seemed to her only like a dream, adding

that she felt no inconvenience from duties which had fatigued her when she was young and healthy, but was on the contrary ready to recommence them when completed. She called her restoration, a real resurrection, almost a transformation.

In the summer of 1862, Madame Joseph Latourneau of Quebec, was laid prostrate by a complication of maladies. Towards the middle of July, the danger became so imminent, that on taking leave of her one evening, the physician begged her husband to let him know in the morning whether she was still alive. There seemed so little hope of her passing the night, that several friends had assembled to assist, as they supposed, at her last moments. One of these visitors brought a little of the water of the tomb, and inquired of the invalid whether she had confidence in it. "Oh, yes!" she replied; "great confidence! Have I a chance of getting any of it? I am sure the holy Mother will cure me."—And in afterwards relating the circumstance, she said, "I began to weep, without knowing why, and felt an internal conviction, that I should be restored." She derived immediate benefit from the water, passed a better night, and the next day, the doctor pronounced her out of danger. During her convalescence, she kept a picture of the Venerable Mother continually before her, convinced, as well as the rest of her family, that she owed her restoration to health to the intercession of this powerful Advocate.

Madame Joseph Bélanger of Quebec gives the following details of a favour obtained through the same channel:—

A thick eruption had gathered over the upper part of her baby's face, spreading gradually to the eyelids and closing the eyes, and still the physicians feared to venture remedies. Seeing that the disease threatened the mouth and ears, the mother became greatly alarmed. Her sister who had received a signal favour from the Venerable Mother, pressed her to use the water of the

tomb with faith, telling her that she still possessed a few drops of it, and assuring her that the child would thus be restored, as she had been herself. The water was accordingly applied lightly and sparingly to the parts affected, and to the joy and admiration of the spectators, the malady appeared at once to change its character. After the third or fourth application, all traces of it had vanished, "as if by magic," said the grateful mother. This event occurred in 1862. When the above details were furnished, the little girl was about six years of age, and up to that period had not shown the least tendency to a renewal of the disease of her infancy.

October 31, 1862.—First Testimony to the cure of Sister Mary of Jesus, a Sister of Charity residing at Cacouma, one hundred and twenty miles from Quebec,—addressed to the Mother Superior of the Ursulines at Quebec.

"REVEREND MOTHER,—A thousand thanks for the small phial of water which you were kind enough to send me. As I wrote you, Sister Mary of Jesus was extremely ill on Friday; that evening she appeared so near death, that the prayers of the agonizing were said for her. She was unable to swallow the water, but no sooner had her lips been moistened with it, than she seemed to revive. The next day the physician found her out of danger to his great surprise. Join us in returning thanks to God and His faithful servant for this great favour.

"Sister MARY DE BON SECOURS, Assistant."

Second Testimony, again addressed to the Mother Superior at Quebec:—

"For the information of all interested in the case, and for the glory of God in His saints, I declare and certify the following:—

"On the 31st of October, 1862, I administered the last sacraments to Sister Mary of Jesus, a Sister of Charity near Quebec, first because from my own observation, I considered her death inevitable, unless averted

by miraculous interposition, and secondly, because the attending physician had assured me that he saw no chance of saving her life. To my certain knowledge, the Mother Superior of the convent exhorted Sister Mary of Jesus to ask for her cure through the intercession of the Mother of the Incarnation, in whom she had herself great confidence, after which, the apparently dying sister took a few drops of the water, spent a good night, and the next day, was so much better, that both, in the house and in the environs, her recovery was declared a miracle, attributable to the prayers of the Mother of the Incarnation. In faith of which, I have signed the present declaration on the 21st of May, 1867.

"J. C. CLOUTIER, P.P. of Cacouma."

Elias Desharnais, a labourer at Stanfold had given himself a severe hurt, while engaged in mowing; the result was a long fit of illness, followed by utter incapacity for all laborious exertion. Two years after this accident, he was thrown from his horse, and so violently trampled, that he was taken up by the passers-by, senseless and apparently lifeless. For forty-eight hours, he remained unconscious, and during the seven or eight succeeding days, frequently relapsed into insensibility. After a time, he was able to walk, but he gained no strength, and every attempt to resume his work so aggravated his sufferings, that after each trial he was constrained to keep his bed for weeks. He had been in this infirm condition six years, when his sister informed him of a remarkable cure just wrought at the Ursuline Convent, Quebec, where she was herself a lay Sister, advising him also to apply for relief to their Benefactress, the Mother of the Incarnation. A first Novena not having produced any sensible improvement, the good religious sent him some of the water of the tomb, urging him to make a second Novena, and to endeavour to approach the Holy Communion at its conclusion. He made the Novena; applied the water to the stomach, the seat of suffering, and on the ninth day approached the holy table. His faith and hope were not frustrated.

From that moment, every trace of his infirmity vanished, he went at once to his work, and having experienced no inconvenience from his first efforts, undertook and accomplished in person the heaviest part of the agricultural labours of the season,—mowing, reaping, saving the hay, storing the grain, &c. Two of his brothers having removed from home about this time, a double share of work devolved on him. He laboured as vigorously and as unceasingly since, as he had done previously to his accident. Such is the testimony which he himself gave at the Ursuline Convent, on the 12th of November, 1866, having travelled from Stanfold to Quebec, for no other purpose than to make the statement, and declaring that he looked on the expense and fatigue of the journey as of little consequence, compared with the happiness of having thus slightly testified his gratitude to his heavenly Benefactress.

1864.—Madame Elzéar Vincent, a resident in Quebec, aged thirty, had suffered for seven weeks from pain in the knee. The inflammation spreading to the thigh, she was compelled to keep her bed and became quite incapable of moving. Miss Bilodeau, a former pupil of the Laval Normal school, having procured some of the water of the tomb for the patient, they both joined in a Novena to the Mother of the Incarnation. The first application of the water was followed by sensible relief. On the third day, the invalid was well, and able to resume her household duties.

On the 21st of October, 1867, Madame Chateauvert, of the suburb St. Louis, Quebec, declared that she believed herself indebted to the intercession of the Mother of the Incarnation for the preservation of her little girl, aged six weeks, during three of which she had suffered from violent convulsions. The same malady had already deprived Madame Chateauvert of four of her children, and the danger in the present case seemed all the more imminent, as the convulsions had set in earlier than with the other little ones. Towards the middle of July,

1867, the attack was so violent that the infant remained insensible for three hours. The water of the tomb was then applied to her temples; she immediately revived and from this first day of the Novena, had no return of the convulsions, but has enjoyed good health.

On the 20th of February, 1867, Mrs. Isaac Fullerton of Quebec presented herself at the Ursuline monastery to give the following account of her wonderful cure. She stated that for seven weeks, she had completely lost the use of her right hand, which was so swollen, especially in the finger joints, that she could neither open nor close it. The pain extended through the arm and shoulder. In addition, she had suffered all through the winter from an almost intolerable ear ache. Having heard of the water of the tomb, she sent for some: she also procured a copy of the prayer* "By the Heart of my Jesus," and began a Novena. At the first application of the water, she found her hand becoming supple, and made her husband observe the improvement. On the ninth day of the Novena, her arm and shoulder were perfectly free from the least pain or stiffness. But the ear ache had not yielded, and on the 9th of February, the day before her deposition, it had been very severe: a tumour had even formed during the preceding days on the upper part of the right ear. In the evening, her husband asked her why she did not try the water of the tomb, which would no doubt prove as efficacious in this case, as it had done in the previous. The idea had not occurred to her before, and finding that a little remained in the phial she applied it to the ear. A momentary sensation of great heat all through the head was followed by total relief from suffering. "God be praised!" she exclaimed, "I am cured; I have no pain!" Her husband echoed her exclamation of surprise and joy, when on examining the ear, he found that even the tumour had disappeared. "I am now perfectly well," concluded Mrs. Fullerton; "entirely free from suffering, and with heartfelt gratitude I declare that it is to the prayer of the Mother of the Incarnation I am indebted for my cure."

* See end of Volume.

Miss Bilodeau, a teacher at Rivière Noire in the parish of St. Agapetus, made the following declaration on the 29th of August, 1867:—

"Towards the end of last May, a child of twelve, named Mary Côté, was brought to my school, with a request that I would prepare her for first communion and confirmation. She was conducted by her aunt, and walked with difficulty; her eyes appeared in a sad condition. I was informed that she had been blind since an attack of small-pox five years before, and that during that period she had endured a martyrdom, especially in winter, when the inflammation increased. Hoping that the disease was not as inveterate as it appeared, I begged her aunt to take her to the chapel, and help her to distinguish the altar and tabernacle, that she might the better understand future instructions on these subjects, for I had been told that she had never even entered a church, her parents living at a considerable distance from the parish church, and not having a vehicle. Accordingly, she was led to the church, but on her return, I was assured she had discerned nothing, not even the conspicuous white statue of our Blessed Lady. I then examined her eyes more closely. I found the lids livid and bluish; close to the lashes, red and inflamed. In the eye itself, pupil, iris and cornea were alike undistinguishable; all that could be seen was a mass of red, white and black spots, frightful to behold. Both eyes were in the same condition. Dr. Morin had declared the case incurable; the parish priest of Gaspé, and two Trappiste Fathers who happened to pass that way, had expressed the same opinion, the last observing that only a miracle could restore sight so thoroughly diseased. 'Well,' I said to the child, 'I know a servant of God who can obtain this favour, if you pray to her very fervently.' I gave her a little of the water of the tomb, telling her to put a drop of it into her eyes every day, and to say daily also, three Paters, Aves, and Glorias, with the invocation 'Venerable Mother of the Incarnation, obtain my cure!' The first days of the Novena,

her sufferings increased so much that she could scarcely support them. I told her not to be discouraged in consequence, for that this increase of pain proved the intervention of the Venerable Mother, and should only stimulate her to redouble her prayers, which she did. On the third or fourth day, she was taken to Mass by her aunt, and although in great pain, prayed with renewed ardour, asking the Mother of the Incarnation to let her see at least the statue of our Blessed Lady. Towards the end of Mass, she felt suddenly inspired to raise her eyes, and saw something white: it was the statue. As she afterwards said, the longer she looked at it, the clearer her vision became. In an ecstasy of delight and amazement, she began to describe to her aunt every thing she saw round the statue and on the altar. On leaving the church, she was subjected to various tests, which only resulted in rendering the miracle more manifest. Her eyes were free from pain and looked perfectly clear, except for a slight discolouration of the left, which however did not interfere with the vision, and soon disappeared. This event occurred on the 8th or 9th of June." On the 23rd of the following August, Miss Bilodeau gave the above details. Dr. Morin, to whom she presented the child, at once recognised his former patient, but could not comprehend the wonderful change visible in her. After a close examination, he declared that only a miracle could have wrought it. The next day he gave the following testimony: "I the undersigned, can certify on oath, that five years ago, I examined Mary Côté's eyes, and found that the small-pox had produced opacity of the cornea of both, or the disease called *leucoma*. I pronounced the case incurable, and refused in consequence to prescribe medical treatment. I certify that I re-examined the same little girl on the 4th of Septmber, 1867, and that I cannot explain the cure of her eyes by natural causes."

"CHARLES MORIN, M.D."

Mary Côté and her mother confirmed the above testimony at a later period.

CURE of MARGARET FOLEY, affected for four years and
a half with deafness, 30th of April, 1868.

Margaret Foley was in her fourteenth year, when in September 1867, she was presented at the Ursuline day school to receive instruction for first communion. She had already been sent to three other schools for the same purpose, but her deafness had in each case proved an insuperable obstacle to the success of her teachers. It soon became apparent to her new instructresses, that the present trial must end like the preceding in total failure, therefore they recommended Mrs. Foley to withdraw her daughter.

When the immediate preparation for first communion was about to commence just before the Lent of 1868, some of the pupils mentioned Margaret Foley, and in the hope that her hearing might have somewhat improved in the interval, her mistresses sent for her, but unfortunately, they found no change in her state. Before the loss of her hearing, she had learned to read imperfectly, consequently she knew something of the text of her catechism, but nothing more. When the period of first communion drew near, one of her mistresses, not knowing what to do, proposed a Novena to the Mother of the Incarnation. Just nine days were to elapse before that of the first Communion, which by a happy coincidence occurred this year on the 30th of April, the anniversary of the death of the saintly Mother. Some of the water of the tomb was given to the little girl, with directions to put a drop of it every day into her ears. The nuns and pupils joined in the Novena, and all declared that it would indeed be a miracle if the poor child should recover her hearing. On Friday, April 24th, the day of the examination of the first communicants, Margaret prayed with renewed fervour before a picture of the Venerable Mother, which some one had given her. Her afflicted mother expected only the usual disappointment, and awaited with a sad heart her return from the convent. Suddenly she heard her bounding up the stairs; then saw her rush into the room, kissing her picture in transports of joy which admitted but of one explanation. She had heard the priest quite

distinctly, she assured her mother, and hoped to be admitted to the heavenly Banquet. The excitement of her companions, and the gratitude of her teachers can be better imagined than described. On the 30th of April, the last day of the Novena, she made her first communion. She was visited by several of the sisters, those especially who had had personal communication with her during the period of her infirmity, and all recognised the wonderful nature of the cure. Mrs. Foley declared that for four years and a half, she had been able to communicate with her only by signs.

On the 10th of January, 1870, Clément Chaillé of Cap Santé declared that his mother, aged seventy-three, had in the preceding August been cured of a cancerous tumour in the nose, which, having resisted all remedies, disappeared on the application of the water of the tomb.

On the 15th of March, 1877, Miss Fortier, a pupil of the Laval Normal School, Quebec, deposed that her brother Emilius Fortier, eighteen years of age, and subject for two years to epileptic fits, had been cured the preceding September by a Novena to the Venerable Mother, and the use of the miraculous water. The young man, who had been compelled to give up his college course on account of his terrible malady, was then so completely cured, that his father had written to re-engage his place for the next year.

Our limits will not permit us to dwell at greater length on the bodily cures effected through the intercession of the Mother of the Incarnation: the number is so great, that even an imperfect list would fill many pages. The same may be said of the favours obtained through her prayers in the spiritual and moral order, on which, in like manner, we shall touch but lightly. The following are but a few among the many instances of such, which might be recorded:—

Deploring the decline of practical piety in the parish where she resided, a school teacher of remarkable virtue determined as the first step to improvement, to introduce devotion to the Mother of the Incarnation. For this

purpose, she began by circulating copies of the Venerable Mother's prayers to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to which we have so often alluded. She besought the holy Mother to interest herself in the great work of the reformation of the people, and as a preliminary, to give some striking manifestation of the power of her intercession with God. The prayer was heard; the impression produced by a few wonderful cures, led to conversions, and before long, a missionary bore public testimony to the marked change which had taken place in the locality since the introduction of devotion to the Mother of the Incarnation.

A young person charged with a school composed of children of both sexes, found herself constantly surrounded with difficulties of all kinds, but it was her invariable habit to place her troubles in the hands of the Mother of the Incarnation, and she found abundant reason to congratulate herself on having adopted the plan. Whether she had to contend with annoyances from parents, and insubordination from pupils, or whether she had to solve scientific questions beyond her capacity, her powerful Patroness brought her safely through every embarrassment. She had become so accustomed to her charitable intervention, that she counted on it as a matter of course. We shall cite but one instance. A grown lad one day asked the solution of a very difficult problem in arithmetic, required for the following day. Now the poor teacher's arithmetic was one of her weak points; she had never seen the rules on which the given question bore, and had not the remotest idea how to set about her task, so as usual, she had recourse to her unfailing refuge, the Mother of the Incarnation, representing to her that without her assistance, she must infallibly lose her reputation as a teacher, and as a consequence, her moral influence over her pupils. Having finished the day's duties, she retired tranquilly to rest, quite convinced that by some means or another, her difficulties would be removed. When she awoke on the following morning, the answer to the problem was as clearly traced on her mind, as if it had been written on

paper before her eyes. She had but to copy the formula on a slate, as she would have copied from a text book on the subject, and then she was ready to meet, and to satisfy her questioner.

There have been instances of visible protection accorded by the Venerable Mother to persons wearing her picture or one of her reliques;—instances of the conversion of the victims of intemperance, and of other obdurate sinners for whom her prayers had been invoked;—instances of disunited families reconciled, pecuniary embarrassments relieved, and temporal affairs brought to a happy issue by being recommended to her charity.

Nor is it only in Quebec, or even in the New World, that the fruits of her intercession have been experienced; on the contrary, wherever appealed to, the result has been the same.

“Among the great number of applicants to the Mother of the Incarnation,” says a letter from Three Rivers, “all, it is true, do not obtain the cures they pray for, but the good Mother never fails to procure them something better. I do not recollect,” continues the writer, “having ever met a single person who had recourse to her intercession and was not satisfied with the result. Some come to tell us joyfully, that they have received the favours they petitioned for; others recognise that it is for their advantage to suffer, since the Mother has not obtained their recovery. Those who have received only partial relief, are contented with it and seem to desire no more.”

In whatever other light the preceding facts are viewed, they must at least be looked on as so many “heavenly messengers” assuring us of the constant protection of our saintly Mother, and as still more necessarily confirm our confidence in her power, and intensify our gratitude for her favours.

“Sing to the Lord a new canticle: let His praise be in the church of the saints.”—(Ps. cxlii. 1.)

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EVENING PRAYER OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION, IN HONOUR OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

By the Heart of my Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I approach Thee, O Eternal Father. By this Divine Heart, I adore Thee, for those who do not adore Thee; I love Thee for all who do not love Thee; I acknowledge Thee as my God, for all the wilfully blind, who through contempt refuse to acknowledge Thee. By this Divine Heart, I desire to pay Thee the homage which all Thy creatures owe Thee. In spirit I go round the wide world, in search of the souls redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. I present them all to Thee through Him, and by His merits I ask for their conversion. O Eternal Father! wilt Thou permit them to remain in ignorance of my Jesus? Wilt Thou suffer that they should not live for Him who died for all? Thou seest, O heavenly Father! that they live not yet; grant them then life, by this Divine Heart. Through this adorable Heart, I present Thee all who labour for the extension of the Gospel, that by its merits, they may be replenished with Thy Holy Spirit.

On it, as on a Divine Altar, I present to Thee especially

Thou knowest, O Incarnate Word, my adorable Saviour! all that I would ask Thy Father by Thy Divine Heart, by Thy Holy Soul. I ask it of Thee, when I ask it of Him, because Thou art in Thy Father, and Thy Father is in Thee. Deign together to hear my prayer, and to make the souls whom I present to Thee, one with Thee. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER OF THE VENERABLE MOTHER MARY
OF THE INCARNATION IN HONOUR OF THE IMMACULATE
HEART OF MARY.

O Divine Spouse of my soul ! what return shall I make Thee for Thine excessive charity towards me ? I give Thee thanks through Thy Blessed Mother. I offer Thee her Immaculate Heart, as I offer Thy Sacred Heart to Thy Father. Suffer me to love Thee by that holy Heart which loved Thee so tenderly ; to offer Thee that body which served Thee, that virginal Sanctuary which Thou didst deign to inhabit. I offer it in thanksgiving for Thy benefits ; I offer it for the amendment of my life, for the sanctification of my soul, and to obtain the grace of final perseverance in Thy service and love.

(Name particular intentions.)

I thank Thee, my Jesus, that Thou wert pleased to choose this most Holy Virgin for Thy Mother. I thank Thee for having granted her the graces suited to this great dignity, and for having deigned to give her to us for our Mother. I adore the instant of Thine Incarnation, and venerate each moment Thou didst spend as a Wanderer on earth. I thank Thee for the example of Thy Divine virtues ; the merit of Thy labours and the effusion of Thy precious Blood. I wish to have neither life nor movement but in union with Thine. Purify my impure and imperfect life, by the purity and perfection of Thy Divine life, and by the holy life of Thy Immaculate Mother. Amen.

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A SLIGHT SKETCH OF THE OLD MONASTERY OF QUEBEC,

FOUNDED BY THE VENERABLE MOTHER OF THE
INCARNATION AND MADAME DE LA PELTRIE, AND
GRAPHICALLY DESCRIBED IN THE HISTORY OF
THE URSULINES.

THE Ursuline Convent of Quebec, built two hundred and forty years ago, and since then, twice rebuilt and vastly enlarged, occupies an area of six acres in the centre of the Upper Town. It is situated on a commanding eminence, almost entirely surrounded by gardens; its secluded inhabitants can, therefore, freely enjoy, from their upper apartments, the views of unrivalled beauty which encompass the city.

To give the reader some idea of the ever increasing prosperity of this favoured establishment, we shall here insert the statistics of its cloistered population within the last eighty years. At the beginning of the present century, the community was composed of 40 professed members—27 of the Choir, and 13 Lay Sisters; added to these were 6 or 7 Novices. The boarders and half-boarders amounted together to upwards of 60, and were united under the same teachers for the study of both the French and English languages. This arrangement was, indeed, a matter of necessity, as there were at the time but two young novices to direct the English classes, Rev. Mother M. Louise McLoughlin of St. Henry, afterwards one of the most efficient Superiors of the house, and Rev. Mother M. Doherty of St. Augustine, who died Mistress of the Novices in 1813.

From the date of the foundation, the day-school pupils had been far more numerous than the boarders, steadily increasing with the progress of the city. At the commencement of the century, two hundred children attended, although no little "Exiles of Erin" had yet augmented their scores. As the Irish element, however, began to intermingle with the population of Quebec, very many of these children made their way to the Ursulines for religious instruction, and soon their numbers increased so amazingly, that in 1824 a day school was opened for them by their zealous teachers, under the auspices and with the aid of the great and good Bishop Plessis, who so dearly loved his adopted Irish flock. From this period especially, the number of French and Irish day pupils augmented very considerably, usually amounting to upwards of 350. For their accommodation, the house formerly occupied by the Foundress was rebuilt and enlarged in 1836.

In 1825 the community was composed of 46 professed Religious, from whom 130 boarders and half-boarders received their education. Here the progress of the institution continues very striking, for in 1855 the community included 56 professed Religious, 38 of whom were Choir Sisters, 18 Lay Sisters, and 10 Novices. At the same date the boarding-school contained 230 pupils, including half-boarders. At the present time, (June, 1880,) the community numbers 62 professed Choir Nuns and 24 Lay Sisters, with 6 white-veiled Novices and 5 Postulants—in all, 97 members. During this last mentioned period, the Boarders' Academy has greatly increased, amounting at times to upwards of 370.

The Normal School Boarders' or Young Teachers' Academy, founded in 1857 by the munificence of the Canadian Government, under the auspices of the Right Rev. Archbishop and the clergy, included at

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first but 40 pupils. These also having increased in due proportion with the rest of the establishment, now number 60 young students, under the direction of Rev. P. Lagacé, fourth Principal. They receive instruction from their own Professors as well as from the Nuns, and constantly attend the day school, to learn from the Mistresses there engaged the difficult art of teaching.

The vast alterations and improvements in the original buildings were effected at various periods, and, necessarily, at great expense. Under the direction of Rev. Mother St. Henry, twenty-second Superior, the spacious classes of St. Ursula were erected in 1830. In 1836, under the direction of Rev. Father Maguire, third Resident Chaplain, the large wing facing Parlor Street was built to accommodate the increasing number of pupils. While Mother St. Gabriel, twenty-fifth Superior, held office, the fine building of Notre Dame de Grace was constructed. A few years later, Rev. Mother Isabella McDonnell of St. Andrew still further enlarged the Convent buildings by the addition of another wing containing the boarders' parlour, reception hall, and music rooms. Later again, in 1873, Rev. Mother St. Mary, being twenty-seventh Superior, the beautiful north wing, dedicated to the Venerable Mother of the Incarnation, was built, and various other improvements also effected with success. Rev. Mother G. Van Felson of St. George, twenty-eighth Superior, laboured with the skill of an artist to embellish the chapel and various other departments.

Since the foundation of the house, 29 Superiors have governed it with wisdom and ability. Of this number, five were French ladies, one English, one Scotch, and one Irish, the present Superior, Rev. Mother E. Tims of St. Catherine, being a native of the Isle of Saints; the others were all natives of Canada.

350 A SLIGHT SKETCH OF THE OLD MONASTERY.

During the last 240 years, 319 professed Religious have successively enjoyed in the old cloister the blessings of a life dedicated to the service of God and the welfare of society. Among these a great many survived to very old age, a favour which seems also to be granted to the Resident Chaplains. Rev. Father Lemoine, the present Chaplain, who has already spent a quarter of a century in the Institution, is, like his worthy predecessor, Rev. Father Maguire, entitled to all praise and gratitude for his untiring devotedness to its prosperity. A lasting proof of this will be found in the "History of the Ursulines of Quebec," published under his direction in the years 1863-66, and in which his intelligent aid was so generously given to the annalists.

BY AN URSULINE OF QUEBEC.



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